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The Newspaper for Me
of the National Educa

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The New Unionist

Second grade teacher Mary Stump is changing how her NEA local does business — and she's not alone.

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NEA Today

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recycled paper

We Can Do Big Things Together

President's Viewpoint

It's time for you to decide if America's educators will speak with one voice.

Bob Chase

Should NEA and AFT unify? This is no longer a speculative question to kick around in a staff lounge or break room. This is an urgent question that every NEA member needs to consider in the weeks immediately ahead.

Why? Because this July, the delegates to the 1998 NEA Representative Assembly will be voting on "Principles of Unity" (see page 43) that define a totally new national organization for America's educators.

These delegates, men and women elected to represent you, will vote by secret ballot. If two-thirds give their approval—and delegates to the American Federation of Teachers convention vote for unity this summer, too—the 2.3 million-member NEA and the 950,000-member AFT will unify. In short, the delegates you elect will decide whether we unify.

To help you make this decision, this issue of *NEA Today* offers a lot of information about unification, as well as opinions both for and against.

I think you'll see, in these pages, that we're working hard to facilitate a free and open exchange of points of view. But since this column is labeled "President's Viewpoint," I want you to know unambiguously where I stand on unification.

I'm for it.

I'm for it because the creation of a new, unified organization for America's public educators will enable all of us to speak—at long last—with one, unified voice. And I believe that if we can speak with one voice, then we'll be able to achieve big things for children, for public education, and for our profession.

But we won't achieve big things with small ideas. So keep your eye on the issues that really matter.

Some are obvious.

Yes, unification would end the waste and inefficiency of having two separate unions pursuing virtually identical agendas.

Yes, unification would end the NEA-AFT turf wars that have squandered millions of dues dollars and pitted educator against educator.

But there's an even bigger picture: There is simply no precedent for a union of more than three million members—members who are active, articulate, respected citizens in virtually every community in the United States. There is no end to what such an organization would be able to accomplish.

This potential is starting to excite Americans outside our ranks who care about education. Listen to Fordham University's Bruce Cooper, writing in *Education Week*.

"A big union," notes Cooper, "can tackle big problems in big ways."

A united organization of educators, explains Cooper, could annually select three major national projects to improve schools, and he suggests three possibilities: available preschooling for all who want it, computers at every desk, and literacy and numeracy for every third-grader.

"Think," writes Cooper, "how the new organization, working at the national, state, and local levels, could adopt these concerns and take concerted action."

I share the enthusiasm that observers like Bruce Cooper are feeling. I believe that our voice, as educators, would be significantly amplified by a new, united organization—in many different ways.

One way would be through affiliation, at the national level, with the AFL-CIO. This affiliation would connect us to millions of working men and women across the country.

Let me speak frankly about the AFL-CIO, because negative stereotypes abound, many propagated by the same political forces that have long opposed our NEA efforts to organize a strong, vital educator presence in American public life.

Here are the facts: The AFL-CIO is a federation of 72 fully independent and autonomous unions. Affiliation with the AFL-CIO at the national level would in no way detract from the independence of our new organization. At the state level, state affiliates of our new, united organization would determine their own relationship with the AFL-CIO.

Who do unions currently affiliated with the AFL-CIO represent? More professionals and white-collar workers than ever before: government professionals, writers, engineers, doctors, nurses, pilots, actors, journalists.

Members of AFL-CIO unions will be—indeed, already are—the natural allies of teachers and other school staffers. After all, it's members of AFL-CIO-affiliated unions who are the parents of our students. They share our commitment to public schools, children, and social justice.

We need these men and women on our side in the upcoming battles to protect and improve public education. Our opponents are united, and we must be united, too.

As educators, we take pride in shaping our students' future. Today, we must dare to shape our own future. With unity and courage, I believe that we can accomplish big things.

Your opinion? You can reach me at BobChase@nea.org. You can also share your views with your NEA colleagues on the Internet. The Web address: www.nea.org/unity.

NEA at a Glance

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Did You Know...
This July's NEA Annual Meeting in New Orleans will mark the 136th time educators from across the United States have gathered in convention to set NEA policy. Close to 9,500 delegates are expected to attend this year's Representative Assembly. Besides deciding the AFT/NEA unification question, these delegates will also vote on NEA's first two-year budget.

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NEA Today this Month

The Vote on Unity

It's a big decision: Should NEA and the American Federation of Teachers unite to create a new organization for America's educators? Inside: more information—and a wide assortment of opinion—to help you make up your mind. Check page 43 for the Principles of Unity that NEA convention delegates will be voting on this July. NEA President Bob Chase offers his perspective on unity on page 2, as do two debaters on page 47. On page 45, a look at unity from an NEA member in an already unified local, followed, on page 46, by an interview with AFT President Sandra Feldman. Finally, on 50 and 51, pro and con commentary from NEA members across the country.

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Cover Story

Matthew Gilson

4 New Unionism
New unionism defies quick and easy definition. It's not just peer review. It's not just cooperation. New Unionism is risk-taking that aims to increase student achievement, and it looks a bit different everywhere it's tried. We feature a dozen daring NEA local affiliates trying New Unionism on for size. As Mary Stump explains on page 6, the gamble is paying off.

Cover photo by Matthew Gilson

Newsmakers

7 Read Across America
NEA members help create the largest celebration of reading this country has ever seen.

8 In the States
You know you have a problem when you have 32 kids in your class, but the average pupil-teacher ratio is 23. Arizona's educators share the solution.

9 On Your Side
Connecticut teacher Sue Gottlieb (below) finds ways to help make inclusion a success—at the bargaining table and in the classroom.

10 Around the Nation
Fans of freedom of speech and public education have a lot to lose if "payroll protection" bills pass. Like their voices.

11 At the Local Level
Add 60,000 new NEA members to the rolls—and read about how hundreds of educational assistants in New Mexico fought to be among them.

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16 Innovators
When kids kill kids with guns, some folks fret. Others like Sedrick Gardner (below), program director of a group called Not Even One, take action.

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What does it mean when U.S. students fall to the bottom of the international math/science achievement heap?

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In one Washington State community, all staff get 11 release days a year for professional growth. And they make it count.

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In America's most urban city, test scores jump. What's technology got to do with it?

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Will you have to take mandatory drug tests? Look to the courts to make the call—soon.

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Did President Clinton go to a fair with Monica Lewinsky? When kids define controversy, you're invited to laugh along.

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40 Money
With two grown kids, a wife, and an aging mom, NEA member Gary Brown has a lot to learn about estate planning. What about you?

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A teacher in an NEA/AFT local explains how unity's already working to boost the bottom line: student learning.

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Two teachers take a crack at the big question: Should NEA and AFT unite to form one organization for educators?

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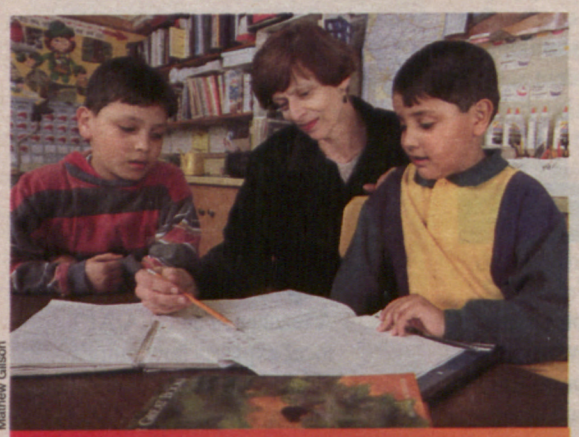
Get back-to-basics this summer with three great books about life, death, parenthood, and baseball.

50 Letters
Discover what NEA members across the country think about unity with AFT. Plus, an Illinois educator explains why he's still on the fence.

New Unioni

It's all about risk-taking, collaboration, and responsibility. And NEA members are making it happen all over the country.

Mary Stump's first stint on her Association's bargaining team was in 1982. "It was unpleasant," she recalls. "School board members didn't trust the teachers and brought in an abrasive outsider to negotiate. I thought, 'This is not the way we should be doing it.'"



Mathew Gilson

Want to know more about teacher Mary Stump's new role as chair of the personnel committee? See page 6.

Fast forward to 1998.

Members of the Glenview (Illinois) Teachers Association and the school board walk into bargaining committed to maintaining their 10-year collaborative focus on student achievement.

Teachers like Stump play key roles on districtwide committees deciding on finance, personnel, and instructional matters. And researchers find statistical evidence that the new shared decision making is pushing up student test scores.

It's that kind of move from adversaries to allies that illustrates New Unionism.

As NEA President Bob Chase put it in a speech before the National Press Club earlier this year: "New Unionism is about taking risks and acting in creative, unconventional ways to address some serious challenges."

The aim? To boost student achievement and improve the quality of the teaching profession.

New Unionism isn't defined by any single activity. As the examples on these pages show, New Unionism means different things in different NEA local affiliates across the country.

Take a look at a dozen groundbreaking examples of what could be coming soon to a school near you.

—Karen Gutloff

Columbus, Ohio

Teachers have taken charge of their profession in Columbus. All new teachers are assigned peer mentors who monitor and evaluate their performance. Veterans who are struggling receive one-on-one counseling and classroom assistance from peers as well. Through peer assistance, the district has retained 85 percent of new teachers. Nationally, half of all new teachers quit in the first five years.

For details, call CEA President John Grossman at 614/253-4731. Or check the CEA Web site at www.ceaohio.org.

Chesapeake, Virginia

The Chesapeake Education Association, school board members, parents, and civic leaders have joined forces to create a five-year school improvement plan. Group members now oversee research in key areas—discipline, technology, standards, and community involvement. They're coming to agreement on how best practices in each area will be implemented in Chesapeake's public schools.

For details, send E-mail to CEA Director Jim Caruth at JC2CEAaol.com.

Montclair, New Jersey

The Montclair Education Association, the school district, and Montclair State University are shaping how student teachers are trained by turning Montclair High into a professional development school. The university sends students to the school to observe professional practice in action. In turn, teachers give the university feedback on how to structure its teacher education program. The Association is also able to provide ongoing in-service training to teachers using university resources and staff.

For details, call MEA President Joe Macaluso at 973/783-6052 or send E-mail to MontclairEA@Worldnet.att.net.

New Albany, Indiana

The New Albany-Floyd County Education Association bargained a contract that gives teachers joint decision-making power over 72 percent of the school district's budget. Through the Association, NEA members set their own salaries, make key curricular decisions, and determine working conditions—including class size. The Association and the administration work hand-in-hand to set policy and solve dozens of problems each year by consensus.

For details, E-mail local President Ron Hutchens at nafcea1@aol.com.

Montgomery County, Maryland

No more top-down school management for the 8,000 members of the Montgomery County Education Association. A landmark three-year agreement signed earlier this year gives teachers a say in school decisions, from how books and supplies are purchased to the best ways to discipline students. Plus, NEA members will create their own professional development programs and play a key role in hiring new teachers. The contract is the first in a decade that didn't require arbitration to settle.

For details, E-mail MCEA President Mark Simon: MSimon@mcea.nea.org.

San Bernardino, California

The San Bernardino Education Association is working collaboratively with the school district, business groups, law enforcement, and parents in the San Bernardino County Coalition. The coalition is studying approaches to early literacy, technology, school safety, high school effectiveness, student assessment, and community relations.

For details, send E-mail to SBEA at Mikkifbta@aol.com.

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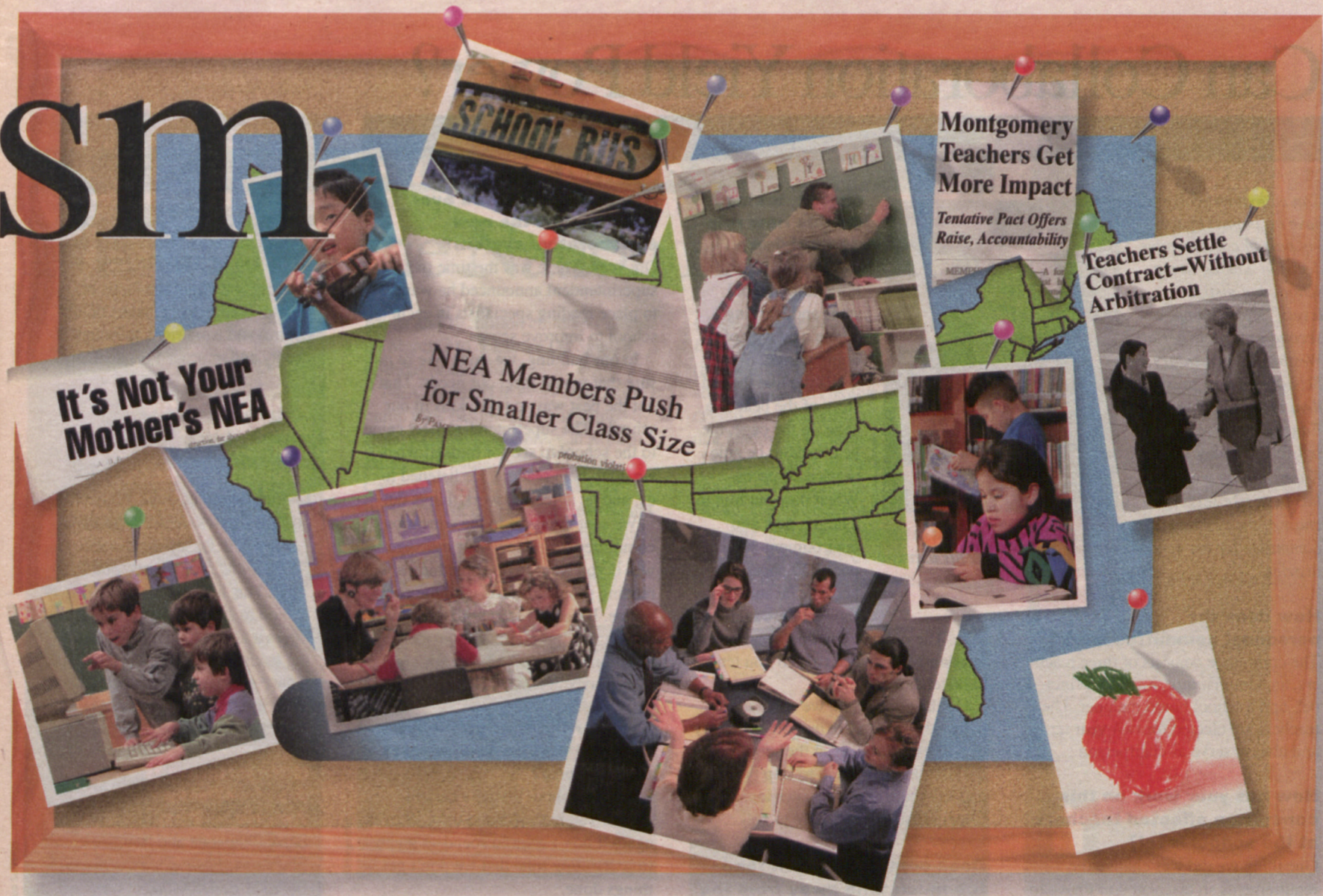

SCHOOL BUS
Montgomery Teachers Get More Impact
Tentative Pact Offers Raise, Accountability
Teachers Settle Contract—Without Arbitration
It's Not Your Mother's NEA
NEA Members Push for Smaller Class Size

Glenview, Illinois

Glenview Education Association members exchanged their contract for a constitution that allows teachers to chair districtwide committees that decide personnel, finance, and curricular matters. The constitution gives teachers discretion to set their own hours and planning time.

For details, send E-mail to Glenview Education Association President Jeannie Jones at jonesj@ncook.k12.il.us or call 847/998-5020.

Norwich, Connecticut

The doors to Integrated Day Charter School opened last August, thanks to teachers, parents, and community residents, who got together to develop policy around specific academic goals. The innovative site emphasizes individualized instruction and self-paced learning. All students in the K-6 school are encouraged to pursue individual research projects.

For details, call school director Joan Heffernan at 860/892-1900.

Bellevue, Washington

All educators are encouraged to improve their professional practice by participating in a voluntary peer assistance and review program. Teachers who receive unsatisfactory evaluations from their administrators are assigned peer consultants who work with them to improve performance.

For details, send E-mail to BEA President Mike Coleman at colemanm@belnet.bellevue.k12.wa.us.

Seattle, Washington

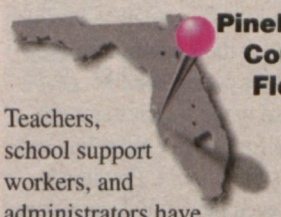
The Seattle Education Association's new contract gives teachers a greater voice in hiring, budgeting, and academic decisions at the school level. In exchange, teachers have agreed to pursue the idea of linking teacher evaluations to student achievement. An earlier agreement shifted money from central administration to individual school buildings, where teachers decide how to spend it.

For details, contact SEA's Roger Erskine at RErskine@is.ssd.k12.wa.us.

Colorado Springs, Colorado

It's risky business, but the Colorado Springs Education Association took the chance and joined with the district to "reconstitute" two local elementary schools. Poor test scores and academic performance prompted district officials to shut the schools down last year, then re-open them with a new focus on student achievement and a new staff. Teachers were given the option of reapplying or transferring to another school in the district. To ensure student success at the reconstituted schools, CSEA is working with the district to provide funding, supplies, and additional staff.

For details, contact CSEA President Jan Noble at PresdCSEA@aol.com.



Pinellas County, Florida

Teachers, school support workers, and administrators have transformed their district based on the philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM). This NEA affiliate now bargains collaboratively with the district on issues that create quality schools. They've bargained a new self-assessment program for teachers, and educators now have a say in how each school building is staffed. In addition, educators attend "quality boot camps" to learn more about school improvement.

For details, contact teacher local President Linda Bacon at LBacon@ftp.nea.org or ESP local President Gloria Smith at GSmith@ftp.nea.org.

Showcase Your Programs

NEA is collecting information on New Unionism efforts that involve collaboration with school administration for school quality, higher student achievement, and peer assistance and review. If you're aware of such programs, please let others know by sharing your information with NEA researchers.

Forms to supply this information can be found on NEA's Web page (www.nea.org/newunion/), sent by Fax (request a form at 202/822-7400), sent by mail (write to NEA Research, New Unionism Initiatives, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036), or sent by E-mail (send a message to par-form@ list.nea.org).

Can Collaboration Yield Power?

Can educators really have an impact by taking part in collaborative decision making at the school and district levels? Mary Stump, a second grade teacher at Westbrook Elementary School and past president of the Glenview Education Association, tells NEA Today*'s Karen Gutloff what it has been like serving as chair of the personnel committee for her school district.*

Mathew Gilson

NEA member Mary Stump takes on new roles with relish.

How does the personnel committee work?
The committee consists of three teachers, an administrator, a school principal, and a school board member. The teachers are elected for two-year terms and always serve as chairperson.

How has your work on this committee affected teachers at the school level?
One thing we did was change the requirements so teachers don't have to take a graduate level course to receive credit. Sometimes teachers don't have the background to complete a graduate level course, or their needs are best met by a junior college course.

We've also made salaries and job descriptions for teacher aides fair and equal across the district. Previously, they didn't even have job descriptions.

What has been the toughest part of taking on this new role as decision maker?
Forgetting the old steps and learning a whole new way of doing things.

It's the like the old story of the bear in a cage. In the cage, the bear used to be able to pace 20 paces. When they put him in a larger, new zoo environment, he paced 20 paces because he still thought he was in his cage. The point is you don't realize the freedom you have at first so you tend to be tentative about it.

On the other hand, we reached the point where we were making too many decisions, especially at the school building level. We had to step back and say there are some decisions the principal ought to be able to make.

Does committee work take too much time away from the classroom?
It does take time. When my children were little, I didn't have the time to do this, so I served on bargaining teams, which was less time-consuming.

As my children grew older and I had fewer responsibilities at home, I did more. Now I say to people, just do something. It doesn't have to be a lot. But do something! I think every educator needs to be involved.

Have administrators ever tried to skirt the new collaborative system?
Oh, yeah. There was the time the superintendent announced he wanted to place reading specialists in each school to improve scores.

In our building, we said, "We're not sure that would meet our needs. That's not the best way to teach kids in our school." The superintendent later came to the school to see for himself what we do to help readers. He listened to us, and he agreed to work things out.

We sent the issue to the education committee for review. Our message was if you want to do something about reading scores, it starts with the committee. It doesn't start with one guy having this light bulb and pushing a program on people. Maybe it's a good idea, maybe it isn't.

Any worries that collaboration will end as new players come along?
I do worry about that to a certain extent. You have to build trust all over again. I don't want to spend so much time building trust that we don't get things done.

Sometimes a new school board member or administrator will fall back into that attitude, "You're doing it because I told you to do it." We teachers just laugh, because it doesn't work that way.

The principals know that by now. Even they just laugh, and acknowledge, "This isn't how it works here anymore. You can't just tell people to do things here. They have input."

Resources

■ United Mind Workers
Charles Kerchner, Julia Koppich, Joseph Weeres. *Jossey-Bass Inc., 1997, $29.95, 800/956-7339.* Argues for shifting the focus of teacher unions from issues of job control and work rules to issues of quality and improved productivity.

■ Taking Charge of Quality: How Teachers and Their Unions Can Revitalize Schools
Charles Kerchner, Julia Koppich, Joseph Weeres. *NEA Professional Library and Jossey-Bass, 1998, $6.95 for NEA members, 800/229-4200.* This introduction and companion to *United Mind Workers* offers a solid blueprint for improving teaching and learning, setting higher standards, and taking charge of the profession through peer review. Stock #2168-1-00-F.

■ Negotiating the Future: A Labor Perspective on American Business
Barry Bluestone and Irving Bluestone. *Basic Books, 1992, $15, 800/331-3761.* A look at how schools can form workplace compacts that connect resources and decision-making procedures to a school's improvement plans.

■ NEA President Bob Chase on New Unionism
Chase's National Press Club speech, delivered on February 11, 1998, is available in text and audio version on NEA's Web site at www.nea.org/whatsnew/newunion.html.

■ Charting New Frontiers: Tools for the 21st Century Education Union
NEA National Center for Innovation. This 15-page booklet explains how total quality principles can become part of an Association and school improvement strategy. For a free copy, write to Christine McMillan, NEA National Center for Innovation, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20012. Or Fax your request to 202/822-7482.

■ A Comprehensive Union
NEA National Center for Innovation. This two-page paper explores current and emerging roles for unions. For a free copy, write to Christine McMillan, NEA National Center for Innovation, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20012. Or Fax your request to 202/822-7482.

Reactions to New Unionism

One concept, zillions of opinions. Here's a look at what the media are saying.

"The rigidity too often displayed by some locals of both teacher unions in resisting reform and being sticklers for every picayune provision of their contract, has earned them the enmity of some school boards, superintendents, and governors. But the reality is that systemic improvement is virtually impossible without the cooperation of teachers and their unions."

—*The Washington Post,* November 9, 1997

"[NEA President Bob] Chase understands that by refusing to be open to reform, the NEA bolsters the cause of those who mean to dismantle public schools. His new approach is refreshing, because the dedication and expertise of NEA members—and of teachers everywhere—are essential if reform is to be successful."

—*Atlanta Journal Constitution,* July 6, 1997

"The NEA has been a convenient target for politicians and policy makers. The knock on the organization has been that it cares more about its members than about public schools. But the NEA has responded to those criticisms in a number of constructive ways. Last year it threw its support behind a pilot for charter schools. It is also urging broader cooperation with school boards in exchange for more decision-making power."

—*The Tennessean,* July 14, 1997

"No one can yet tell whether Chase and his allies can truly bring along the 13,000 affiliates in NEA's decentralized, far-flung empire. Chase is gaining momentum, and if he can succeed, prospects for millions of children will be brighter."

—*U.S. News and World Report,* December 8, 1997

Around the Nation

NEA Gets the Nation Reading

NEA members create the largest celebration of reading this country has ever seen.

Read Across America, NEA's first national literacy event, brought one million adults and 10 million children together on March 2 to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday with books.

NEA members in every state in the union took part in the event, joined by Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, Cal Ripken, James Earl Jones, Newt Gingrich, Carly Simon, Tavis Smiley, LeVar Burton, musician Howard Hewett, and hundreds of other notable Americans.

"I've never been prouder to be a teacher," said NEA President Bob Chase as he helped a child christen the *USS Reader Ship* in Norfolk, Virginia (below). "Never before have we been so united and so creative in sending a crystal clear message to our children that reading is important."

Special thanks go to three publishing houses—Scholastic Inc., Random House, and Grolier Publishing—for donating thousands of books to needy children, and to MBNA America Bank, N.A. for its generous support.

Scott Suchman

I. George Bilyk

Kevin Elliott

Andrew Ilkoff/Silver Image

Sandy Schaeffer

That Cat and his hat sure got around! On March 2, the Cat visited First Lady Hillary Clinton, the Liberty Bell, and NEA President Bob Chase. Below, three students at a national NEA event were inspired to read on their own. Left, Read Across America chair Cal Ripken, Jr. read to a Florida student.

Heroes & Zeroes

Call it a chance for *higher* education. This summer, Idaho third grade teacher and NEA member Barbara Morgan will move to Houston to enroll in astronaut training. It's time, NASA says, to let teachers become mission specialists and time—always—to send kids a powerful message about teachers, students, math, science, and potential.

AP/Wide World

Keep the tea and throw the money overboard! It's a privateers party in Boston, where state board of education members recently voted to award eight publicly funded school charters—four of them to for-profit firms. How's that going to benefit the public?

An Integrity-to-Spare Award to Seattle Superintendent John Henry Stanford, who turned down a cool half-million-dollar signing bonus offered by local businesses. "If I had $500,000," he said, "I'd do something for the teachers in our schools who don't make a living wage." Priceless.

Meanwhile, MCI Chairman Bert Roberts—who'll get a $10.5 million "retention bonus" when WorldCom, Inc. and MCI consummate the biggest corporate merger in U.S. history—is in no mood to share with teachers or students. Last year, MCI balked at the prospect of paying into a universal service fund created to help schools afford Internet access.

In Jonesboro, Arkansas, teacher Shannon Wright gave her life to save the life of a child. There is nothing more heroic than that—and nothing sadder than the deaths of children at the hands of other children wielding guns on school grounds. Those who wish to help the affected families and endow scholarships in the names of those killed can contribute to the Westside Assistance Fund, c/o Union Planters Bank, 300 South Church St., Jonesboro, AR 72401.

In the States

Testifying from Trenches

The Arizona Education Association's new class size report features lots of numbers—and teacher comments.

- "Twenty-nine is far too many second graders in an inner city classroom like ours. These kids are language- and experience-deprived and need help."
- "Hard to do many activities. Hard to give individual attention or person-alize things. Very crowded. A lot of special needs."
- "I do the best I can with my situation and I really can't complain, because compared to some classrooms, my class of 38 is small. But the implication is that schools are just holding tanks. It breaks my heart."

"The AEA report deserves to be taken seriously," writes the *Arizona Daily Star*. "What all this points to is our need for smaller classes if Arizona ever hopes to establish quality."

Other States, Same Story

Connecticut Education Association members are supporting legislation to reduce K-3 class sizes in the state's high-needs school districts to no more than 15. All additional teachers hired to meet this target, the bill specifies, should be required to have comprehensive training in the teaching of reading.

And in **Minnesota**, NEA and AFT members are urging legislators to back the hiring of 8,227 teachers to lower class size. The cost: $270 million.

Needed: Federal Support

President Clinton's proposed Fiscal Year 1999 budget calls for $12 billion in tobacco-settlement funding over seven years to help local school districts hire and pay 100,000 new teachers—and reduce classes in grades 1-3 to a nationwide average of 18.

Under this plan, states would receive funds for teacher training, and new teachers would be required to pass state competency tests.

What you can do: Urge federal lawmakers to support funding for class size reduction, teacher recruitment, and adequate school facilities—like additional classroom space.

Arizona Educators Take Attendance

How do you compute a state's *real* class size average? You count heads, lots and lots of heads.

Something serious was brewing last fall in the 32 elementary schools comprising Arizona's 25,000-student Washington District. Building reps were strategizing at meetings and plastering school walls with posters, while the Washington District Education Association was dispatching releases to the Phoenix news media.

Then everything broke loose on November 18, when 600 Association members, teachers and support staff alike, boldly slapped on "Count 'em" stickers and, well, counted little heads in each and every classroom.

Washington District NEA members weren't alone on "Class Size Counts for Quality Day." Across Arizona, where a booming population and chronic state underfunding have sent class sizes through the roof, school employees did head counts in 19,032 classes and forwarded their tallies to the Arizona Education Association.

AEA's final numbers demolished the credibility of the Arizona Department of Education's statewide "average" pupil-teacher ratio of 19—which factors in all certified personnel, not just classroom teachers.

The *real* statewide average, reports AEA, is 25.5. What's worse, two-thirds of the tabulated classes had more than 25 students and one-third packed in more than 30 young scholars.

Association leaders, who are using AEA's numbers to enlist legislative and community support for "right-sized" classes, aren't content to let numbers alone do the talking.

"Class size is really a classroom-by-classroom story, best told by the teachers themselves," stresses AEA President Kay Lybeck.

In the Washington District, a local ABC-TV news crew heard such stories on "Count 'em Day" from Phoenix elementary teachers Nancy Scruggs and Virginia Hourihan.

"There's 26 of them and me," said Scruggs, a gaggle of first graders seated on the floor in front of her. "I like to get to all three of my reading groups, but sometimes it's difficult."

Hourihan, the local Association president, said her class of nearly 30 third graders includes three learning disabled students, three gifted students, plus 15 kids whose first language is not English.

"We have to do a lot of planning to have one group do one thing while another group does something else," Hourihan told the TV reporter, "and we have to deliver lessons differently for different kinds of learners."

Association members will have lots more to explain as they lobby for legislation establishing an Arizona fund for site-developed class size reduction programs.

Republican state legislator Tom Horne filed such a bill on AEA's behalf this year, but it was eclipsed by school capital funding equalization and not heard.

Still, class size reduction will be a high priority next year and Association members will "continue to talk about class size being the 'right size' for each kind of student, class, and teaching," promises AEA staffer Daphne Atkeson.

"We urge local districts and schools to get more media exposure," says AEA President Lybeck. "The class size issue plays best right in the neighborhood where the school is.

"And we need to identify new allies in this campaign," she adds. "Old assumptions about particular groups—like seniors or families without children—have to be buried."

Concludes Lybeck: "We need to get people to recognize how teaching and learning change when you have a smaller group of kids to work with."

For More Information

To read an article about the Arizona Education Association's class size study, point your Web browser to www.arizonaea.org.

John Miller

Virginia Hourihan teaches nearly 30 third graders at Shaw Butte Elementary in Phoenix, Arizona. That's not the "right-sized" class for her particular students, she says.

The Bottom Line

An 'F' for school buildings: America's roads and bridges may need massive repair work, but the public infrastructure in worst shape: the nation's schools. So says the American Society of Civil Engineers in a report available at www.asce.org.

Economic bonus: State education spending will likely increase 5 to 7 percent next year, thanks to budget surpluses many states are enjoying this year. The bad news: Local funding support for schools, notes the Center for the Study of the States, is dropping.

Spreading Web: The share of the nation's K-12 classrooms hooked into the Internet, just 3 percent in 1994, jumped to 27 percent in 1997. Overall, 78 percent of schools now have at least one Internet connection, says the U.S. Department of Education.

Wasted tax dollars: The Cold War is over, but the United States is still spending $4 billion a year on the "Star Wars" anti-missile system first proposed by Ronald Reagan. A new Defense Department report calls the costly program a "rush to failure."

On Your Side

Bargaining for the Best Shot

Good contract language can help make inclusion a success. But what does it look like?

Connecticut second grade teacher Sue Gottlieb found out early in her career that dedication alone isn't enough to deal with the challenges of an inclusive classroom.

In her second year of teaching at Stamford's Springdale School, Gottlieb was ordered to include a disabled student in her general ed class—placed for reasons more social than academic. She was then closely monitored by the child's district-appointed advocate.

Talk about stress.

Even with help from a "phenomenal" special ed teacher, Virginia Lucey, Gottlieb says, "I struggled to go above and beyond for one particular student, with a curriculum that wasn't easily modified, while dealing with the rest of the class. It was a real stretch."

Gottlieb, whose own brother lives with a severe disability, desperately wanted to make things work.

"We trained as we went along," Gottlieb adds. "Virginia taught me everything I know about discipline, but nobody factored in my inexperience."

All that pressure, including the child advocate's demand that Gottlieb rearrange her classroom just *one day* before the start of school, prompted this novice educator to seek help from the Stamford Education Association.

Gottlieb declined her local affiliate's offer to file a grievance. Instead, she worked with the local to bring her concerns to the bargaining table.

Gottlieb told negotiators about her situation, then suggested new contract provisions for more training, time during the day to meet with parents, and prior notice to teachers of special education student needs.

"I commend Sue for her courage and altruism," says local President Walter Domeika. "Her testimony was the catalyst we needed to negotiate a solution for all teachers."

Richard Freeda

With help from her contract, Connecticut second grade teacher Sue Gottlieb strives to provide a top quality education to all the students in her inclusive classroom.

Gottlieb's statement—backed by parents, teachers, and administrators—produced an agreement that today:

- Guarantees a Stamford general ed teacher consultation and training on a mainstreamed child's special needs, both "as far in advance as possible" and during the school year.
- Provides a general ed teacher "all necessary training" at district expense and release time or pay at the hourly curriculum rate for activities like attending "necessary meetings," working with consultants, and observing special ed students in other settings.
- Establishes "weights" that count students with special needs as two students when tallying up totals to determine maximum class size.

Of all these gains, Gottlieb considers the weighting language the biggest step forward.

With a mainstreamed student, she points out, "You sometimes feel like you have four kids. You're on your toes every second of the day. This provision recognizes that these students take so much more attention."

Such strong contract language is a must in Connecticut, a state with few legal guidelines for inclusion, notes Patti Ralabate, vice president of the Connecticut Education Association.

"Our UniServ reps," she points out, "have become very astute about what kind of specialized special ed language would be helpful."

CEA complements its bargaining expertise with teacher workshops on rights and responsibilities under both the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which ban bias against the disabled, including those with learning disabilities, in federally assisted programs.

Rights, however, are useless unless they're enforced. "Union reps can't represent you properly unless you tell them what's going on in your classroom," Gottlieb says.

"If I hadn't called the Association," she concludes, "they wouldn't have known about my problems until something blew—like me."

For More Information

Send an E-mail message to Connecticut Education Association Vice President Patti Ralabate at Pattir@cea.org. For additional resources on working with students with disabilities, visit the Council for Exceptional Children's Web page at www.cec.sped.org.

Inclusion for Teachers, Too
Stamford isn't the only Connecticut district with strong inclusion contract language. For more than 10 years, the Stratford Education Association has had weighting for special ed students (now 1½ to 1), plus release time for teachers to write individual education plans and attend IEP meetings. "It has worked well," reports UniServ rep Jeff Rosenberg. "General ed teachers have had the opportunity to participate in these important meetings, and most sessions have been during the day."

A Great Start in Greenville
Some 90 members of the newly organized Greenville (Illinois) Educational Support Personnel Association have overwhelmingly ratified their first contract.The three-year agreement includes a no-subcontracting clause, quicker progression to the top pay step, an employer-paid pension contribution, wage reopeners in the second and third years, and an end to a two-tier wage system.

Persevere and Prevail
Two hours before a contract extension was set to expire, school board negotiators dropped 28 pages of new contract language on representatives of the St. John (Louisiana) Association of Educators. Several weeks later—after seven months of grueling bargaining—SJAE members finally approved a three-year contract that provides a mechanism for future raises and protects benefits that school board members had targeted for reduction.

Staff Unity Pays Off Again
Following an eight-day strike in January, members of the Liberty (Ohio) Education Association and Liberty Association of Classified Employees ratified three-year agreements that, among other things, provide equal percentage increases to teachers and support staff, improve training and leave provisions, and provide pay equity increases for paras and lunchroom workers who work three- and four-hour shifts.

Saturday school: Students in the Long Island community of Uniondale are now attending voluntary weekend classes. The Saturday sessions go from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. High school-level classes run 90 minutes, and teachers are paid at an hourly overtime rate.

More diversity: Just over a third of the students in America's public schools are from minority groups. Most of these minority students are either Black (17 percent of overall student total) or Hispanic (13 percent), according to the U.S. Office of Civil Rights.

Less diversity: At the higher ed level, minority students now account for less than one-quarter of postsecondary enrollment. One out of every 10 college students is Black. About 6 percent are Hispanic, and nearly the same percentage are Asian/Pacific Islander.

Priorities: What do U.S. adults value most? In a new poll that asked adults what would they do if they suddenly became wealthy, nearly a third said they would invest in housing. About the same number said they would put their money in education.

Around the Nation

California, Here It Comes

"Paycheck protection" measures have passed in Washington State, Michigan, and Idaho. And on California's ballot this June is Proposition 226—the Campaign Reform Initiative.

If passed, warns NEA President Bob Chase, Prop. 226 would "severely hamper teachers' abilities to advocate for children and quality public schools, and undermine New Unionism by making it harder for educators—and union members everywhere—to influence policy.

"Prop. 226 would give us less responsibility at a time when we need to assume more," Chase adds. "For the sake of children and our schools, NEA is opposing it."

Who's Behind All This?

Look for hard-core proponents of privatization, private school tuition vouchers, and a union-free workplace, and you'll find the groups pushing "paycheck protection" measures. The list includes the American Legislative Exchange Council, the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), and other extremist organizations.

ATR President Grover Norquist isn't bashful about articulating his agenda. "If you privatize Social Security, if you voucherize education, if you sell the $270 billion worth of airports and wastewater treatment plants, eliminate welfare, and so on," he said, "you can get the federal government, state government, and local government [down] to basically half of its present level of costs."

Hanging in the Balance

At stake in the "paycheck protection" battle is NEA members' freedom to speak out on bills like The Public School Modernization Act (S. 1705, H.R. 3320)—which would generate $22 billion to help states and localities repair safety problems, build new schools, and connect classrooms to technology. For details, point your Web browser to www.nea.org/society/modern.

Who's Protecting What?

Beware of "paycheck protection" bills and initiatives. They're designed to silence your voice in the political arena.

School administrators in Cobb County, Georgia, recently denied eighth grade algebra teacher Debra Gunter a professional day off to lobby state legislators on education-related issues.

So Gunter took a precious personal day and drove to the state capitol. There she bumped into three Cobb district central office staffers who were lobbying—on district time.

Don't try to tell this NEA member that school employees shouldn't be in the political arena.

"Superintendents and school board members lobby lawmakers," Gunter says. "We have just as much right to lobby as they do.

"Politicians and superintendents are not in the classroom every day dealing with kids," adds Gunter, a teacher at Tapp Middle School. "They must either allow us to *make* decisions affecting education or let us *influence* the people making the decisions."

In America today, influencing the people who make decisions—state and national lawmakers—has become an expensive operation.

That's why the Cobb County Association of Educators asks each of its 1,000 members to voluntarily contribute $10 a year to the local's own political action committee—run by an elected committee of NEA members who are Democrats, Republicans, and independents.

"We recommend candidates on the basis of their integrity and track record on educational issues," notes Gunter, a committee member. "We've endorsed people from both parties and even run our own candidates."

Increasingly, this bipartisan, grassroots political strategy is paying off for NEA state and local affiliates—perhaps better than anyone thought.

NEA member success in electing pro-public education legislators—lawmakers opposed to spending public tax dollars for private school tuition—has irritated the privatizing zealots immensely. They're now pushing nationwide to block NEA member donations for legislative and political action.

Johnny Crawford

Georgia teacher and NEA member Debra Gunter says, "Let teachers make the big decisions or influence the people who do."

The strategy of the privatization crowd: Push legislation or ballot initiatives that make it as difficult as possible for NEA affiliates to collect voluntary political action payroll deductions—and outlaw the use of union dues for lobbying.

The groups behind these so-called "paycheck protection" measures argue that NEA affiliates have no legitimate role beyond grievance handling and contract bargaining.

"I'd like to see somebody just *try* to stop my local from lobbying legislators over issues like class size or retirement," counters Gunter.

Republican leaders in Congress and many states are heavily promoting the "paycheck protection" push, but not all Republicans are going along. In Georgia, Republican Senator Robert Lamutt—a friend of public education elected with Association support—helped kill a "paycheck protection" bill in committee.

Prior to *NEA Today* presstime, similar bills bit the dust in South Dakota, Kansas, and Missouri, thanks to opposition from unions, moderate Republicans, and even—in Kansas—two corporations with employee PACs.

In Congress, "Paycheck Protection" lawmakers are trying to force through legislation that defines internal union communications to members, lobbying, and other advocacy activities as illegal "political" use of union dues.

Educators join NEA, notes NEA staff counsel Richard Wilkof, because they want advocacy in the legislative and political arenas.

"The passage of 'paycheck protection' bills and initiatives," says Wilkof, "will exert a chilling effect on NEA's ability to speak out for our members and for public education."

For More Information

NEA's Project on State Association Political Activities maintains a database on "paycheck protection" bills and initiatives. To give or receive information, call project coordinator Bobby Watson at 202/822-7811.

The Bottom Line

Longer studies: Postsecondary students, says the U.S. Department of Education, now take an average of five and one-half years to graduate from college. One reason: About 60 percent of college students switch schools before graduation.

Learning nest eggs: Endowments for America's most affluent universities are soaring. Thanks to the 1997 stock market boom, 25 institutions of higher education now boast endowments of at least $1 billion. Harvard's endowment tops $11 billion.

Virtual university: The nation's newest college opens this fall—with no campus. The Western Governors University will function totally in cyberspace, offering distance-learning courses from a variety of participating colleges and commercial suppliers.

Teen pregnancy: One million young women under the age of 20 become pregnant each year, but teen pregnancy rates are down slightly since 1990. The vast majority of teen pregnancies—78 percent—are unplanned, reports the Kaiser Family Foundation.

At the Local Level

'Get Me to the Polls on Time'

By 298-8, educational assistants in Las Cruces, New Mexico, vote yes for collective bargaining.

Rafael Rivera

In Las Cruces, New Mexico, educational assistants Lillian Chavira (left) and Cindy Zumwalt show their enthusiasm for a recent vote on union representation.

When educational assistants in Las Cruces, New Mexico went to the polls February 18 to vote on union representation, it seemed like *everybody* was clamoring to drive them there.

"Ride this battle-scarred, but steady Ford van to Sierra Middle School with the confidence of knowing it can go for the long haul," noted one sign posted by a union supporter.

"Sit back in luxurious leather comfort for the short trip to Sierra in this roomy Caddy—departs 3:15," boasted another.

Getting potential union members to the polls is critically important in New Mexico, where the state's public sector bargaining law requires a 60 percent turnout of eligible voters for a representation election to be valid.

Not surprisingly, the district's associate superintendent urged the 485 educational assistants not to vote.

But with a lot of help and hard work from fellow union members, 308 assistants made it to the polls, and 298 of them voted for bargaining representation by the Classified School Employees Council.

Such support has made the Council, which is a "merged affiliate" of both NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, a force to contend with.

Formed in 1994 to organize Las Cruces's 1,400 support employees, the Council has so far won bargaining rights for custodians and educational assistants—with more units to come.

The Council's formula for success:

■ **Plenty of hard work.** "The Council won the February election," explains election coordinator and Council Vice President for Educational Assistants Irma Valdespino, "through the combined talents and energy of a strong core of assistants—including Milas McLeod, Lillian Chavira, Gloria Avalos, Cindy Zumwalt, Marcia Brown, and Yolanda Knodle—and the expertise of both NEA and the AFT."

Throughout the campaign, Council building reps at 32 schools built support for bargaining through phone banks, fliers, site meetings with colleagues, and more.

"We couldn't have done this without each other," stresses Valdespino. "It all goes back to our slogan, '*Juntos—together.*'"

■ **Winning issues.** Along with better pay—starting assistants make just $7,000 a year—Las Cruces support staffers are seeking the "respect and dignity we deserve as employees," says Valdespino, a bilingual educational assistant at Mayfield High School.

"We need to be part of the professional team," adds Council President Milas McLeod, a special ed assistant at Sierra Middle School. "We have no voice in professional development, yet we need to be kept up to date."

Tired of seeing verbal agreements vaporize and tired of dealing with the district's "long and tedious" grievance procedure, educational assistants also want to "set the rules in stone," stresses McLeod.

"We want the district to abide by what is written down in a contract," he explains, "a binding agreement that addresses concerns like job stability, transfers, and evaluations."

■ **Support from everywhere.** Las Cruces ed assistants received support from all the right people, including NEA and AFT national leaders and school support staff from other New Mexico AFT and NEA local affiliates.

"It would have been difficult for either union to win this election on its own," says NEA staffer Rafael Rivera. "This was a positive learning experience for both NEA and AFT."

"While there were some differences," adds AFT rep Pat Denslow, "we realized we could all work together in the field—and we all wanted to win this vote."

■ **Amazing potential.** "We could not have won this election without the backing of a lot of people," says Milas McLeod.

Within the district, campaign support came from custodians—who are still bargaining for their first contract—and teacher members of NEA-Las Cruces.

"When you put those 1,700 teachers together with our potential membership of 1,400 classified employees," he promises, "we'll be a formidable power in dealing with this district."

For More Information

Send a Fax to the Classified School Employees Council, 505/523-7956.

Welcome, New Members!

Whether they work in classrooms, clinics, or kitchens, folks just keep joining NEA affiliates. This past year, another 60,000 educators joined up. An update on a few recent votes:

■ In Illinois, teachers in the Oak Park-River Forest High School district voted overwhelmingly to join the Illinois Education Association-NEA. The 182-teacher unit was one the state's last large non-union faculties.

And by a 3-1 margin, 478 part-time faculty members at Columbia College in Chicago also voted for IEA-NEA. Among the hot issues: low pay and no health benefits.

■ By 87 percent, 90 nurses at the Hospital for the Chronically Ill in Smyrna, Delaware, voted to affiliate with Public Health Nurses/DSEA, an NEA affiliate.

■ In Maine, food service workers in Thomaston chose the Maine Education Association as their bargaining agent. And MEA's affiliate in the Kennebunk and Kennebunkport area has new bargaining units for ed techs (paras) and school nurses. Both groups are gearing up for representation votes.

On a Roll in New Mexico

Just a day before Las Cruces educational assistants said yes to collective bargaining, employees of the New Mexico School for the Visually Handicapped voted 112-6 for representation by NEA-New Mexico.

The 135-employee unit—which includes teachers and support staff at two campuses—will soon negotiate a contract with the school Board of Regents, says teacher and local President Mark Carter.

"This year we have a new board and new superintendent," Carter notes, "so we feel the need to pull together and preserve our family environment. There's no other place we'd rather work."

Through the Association, he adds, "Employees will be better able to communicate with parents and the political community about what we're teaching and why."

Kid crisis: More than 3.1 million children were abused or neglected in 1997, an all-time record. Abuse totals are up 45 percent since 1986. Three children in the United States, reports the Child Welfare League of America, die from abuse every day.

Less trouble: Teenagers are committing fewer serious crimes, says the U.S. Department of Justice. Between 1992 and 1996, the number of youths arrested for murder and non-negligent manslaughter dropped 19 percent.

Underage drinking: A typical 16-year-old is far more likely to die from an alcohol-related incident than from any other cause, says the University of Michigan. Nearly half of tenth graders admit riding in a car with a driver who has been using alcohol or other drugs.

Poor kids: Detroit, New Orleans, Miami, and Atlanta all share a disappointing distinction. More than 40 percent of the children in these cities live in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In East St. Louis, 58 percent of children are poor.

Once computers were integrated into Maxwell Middle School, attendance went up, test scores went up and grades went up. Among teachers this is called job satisfaction.

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This is the story of Maxwell Middle School. A school in Tucson, Arizona, where a dedicated group of educators set out to prove that using computers in the classroom can make a very real difference in the lives of our children. And as a result, they came up with a lesson plan from which we can all learn.

In 1992, educators at Maxwell designed an entirely new curriculum that would truly integrate technology with learning. Using Compaq multimedia desktops, notebooks and servers, students began collaborating on projects across disciplines and communicating with e-mail – learning in school like they'll work in the real world. It didn't take long before students began asking permission to skip lunch to continue working. "I couldn't chase them out of the classroom," said Sue Foree, a teacher at the school. "Suddenly, they were getting twice as much done as they would in a typical academic year. It's been the most rewarding experience of my career."

For more information on the extraordinary achievements at Maxwell Middle School, visit www.compaq.com/education/alliances/tucson. For more information on Compaq's technology solutions and how our local Certified Education Partners can help you implement them better, simply call the world's leading provider of computers at **1-800-88-TEACH.**

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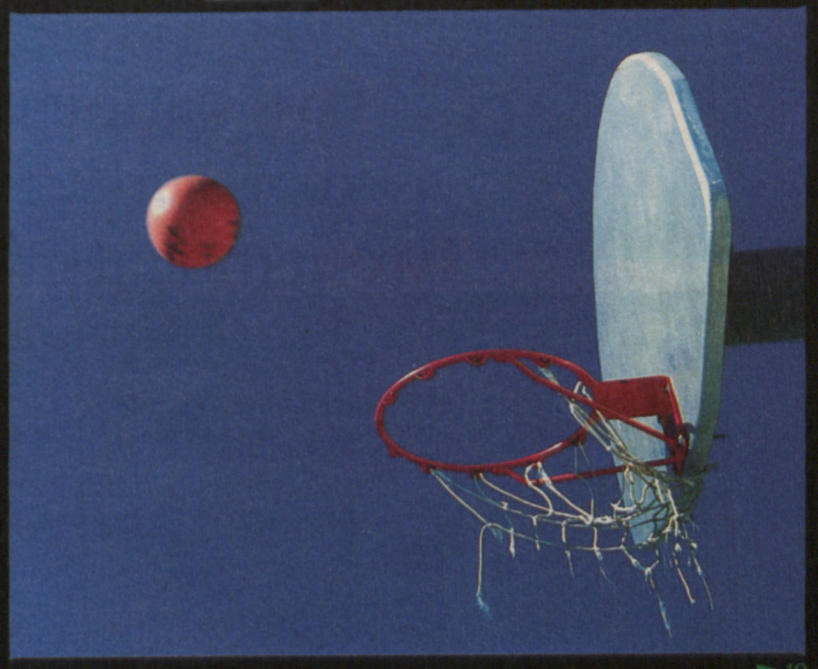

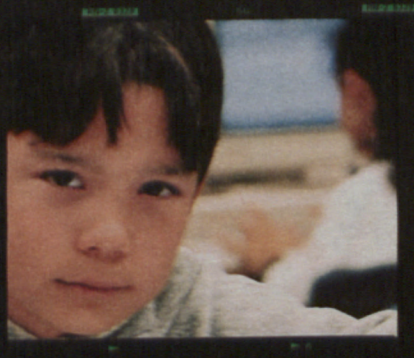

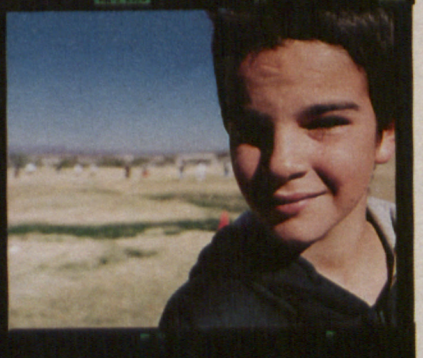

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Two national groups say they represent retired educators.
Two national groups say joining will keep you connected with public education and educators.

Confused?

Don't Be.

Only **NEA-Retired** has a unique program and tools to continue your association with public education at all levels.

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NEA-Retired—It's the *only* retired education organization to join. And if you're nearing retirement but still actively employed, you can join now as a pre-retired member. Joining NEA-Retired as a pre-retiree guarantees you coverage and representation when you retire and maintains your links to NEA and public education.

To keep you connected, call **1/800-637-4636**—M - F, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET, Sat., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. — for **NEA-Retired** membership information and a free sample copy of the *NEA Retired magazine*.

nea
National Education Association

Michigan teacher Nancy Clark gets heartfelt recognition from a kindergartner who knows all that she's done for him. But what else—besides a big hug—can prove to the public that you're doing a good job? See page 20.

Margaret Trimer-Hartley

Innovators

Teaching to a Different Tune

Innovator:
Linda Arms Gilbert

Job:
Music teacher, Black Fox Elementary School, Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Photos by Dan Loftin

Bright Idea:
Gilbert's music students are wired, networked —and jazzed.

Gilbert has created a music lab that includes 17 synthesizers connected to computers—a combination that lets her students add or mix sounds as they create original compositions.

Headphones and a large amplifier complete the picture at this computerized keyboard lab, which Gilbert built with help from a state technology grant.

"This class is more than a piano lab where students learn theory," Gilbert says. "It's a way for them to learn the basics of music by performing the basics.

"Really, the students have 16 sound studios at their fingertips," Gilbert adds.

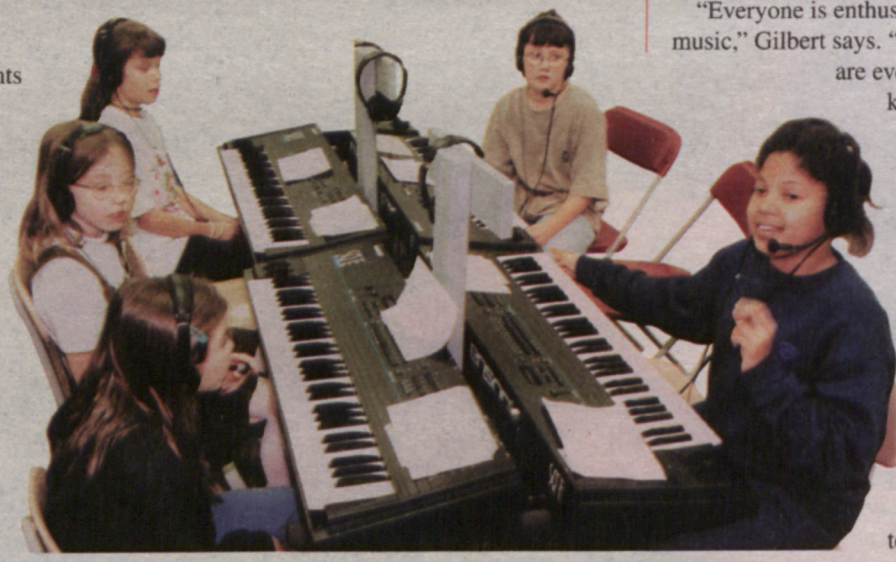
Equipped with a master headphone, Gilbert can plug in to all her students at once or a particular group at any time, directing them as they work on keyboards or computers. Students can listen to each other individually and put on performances for the entire class.

Gilbert gives her students the freedom to compose and arrange songs—to create their own musical masterpieces.

"It's a terrific experience for the kids," says Gilbert. "Students who may not get along will work together to create a piece. That's what we're striving for—cooperation not competition."

Impact:
Gilbert's class has put on two first-class performances for the public, and her lab has become a model for other educators and school systems throughout the state to observe. Plans are now in place to establish similar labs throughout the Murfreesboro school district.

"Everyone is enthusiastic about music," Gilbert says. "Parents are even buying keyboards for their children."



For More:
Contact Gilbert at Black Fox Elementary School, 615/896-3785. E-mail: gilbert11@ten-nash.ten.k12.tn.us.

Bullet Proof

Innovator:
Sedrick Gardner

Job:
Program director, Not Even One

Bright Idea:
Stories about kids killing and being killed by guns are making headlines. But people like Gardner are starting to make news, too.

Through the Not Even One program operating in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico, Gardner is getting people to take note—and take action—when it comes to kids and firearms.

"We work with the police, community activists, ministers, parents of murdered children, teenagers, and staff in public schools," Gardner explains. "We try to get a complete picture of how a child was lost and how that loss could have been prevented."

The New Mexico sites are part of a national Not Even One project created by the Carter Center in Atlanta to collect data on firearm deaths of young people from birth to age 19.

The program's name—and inspiration—came from a conference on youth and firearms held four years ago.

"People were saying we could reduce the death rate by 25 to 50 percent," Gardner recalls. "But parents said that not even one death of a child by firearm is acceptable."

Impact:
In 1997, gun-related deaths fell by 40 percent in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Police in the two cities are now tracing guns used in teenage deaths, Gardner notes.

And under consideration are local laws that will require a lock on every gun purchased to prevent a child from operating it.

For More:
Contact the Not Even One national headquarters at the Carter Center, One Copenhill, Atlanta, GA 30307. E-mail: woodar@emory.edu. Contact Gardner at 505/476-7000. E-mail: neosedrick@aol.com.

The Heart of Teaching

The Courage To Teach: Exploring The Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life *by Parker J. Palmer, (Jossey-Bass, 199 pp., $22). "This book is for teachers who have good days and bad," notes Palmer, an educator and writer, "who refuse to harden their hearts because they love learners, learning, and the teaching life."*

"In our rush to reform education, we have forgotten a simple truth: reforming will never be achieved by renewing appropriations, restructuring schools, rewriting curriculums, and revising texts if we continue to demean and dishearten the human resource called the teacher, on whom so much depends.

Teachers must be better compensated, freed from bureaucratic harassment, given a role in academic governance, and provided with the best possible methods and materials. But none of that will transform education if we fail to cherish—and challenge—the human heart that is the source of good teaching.

We are now engaged in a crucial public conversation about educational reform, but a conversation is only as good as the questions it entertains. . . .

The question we most commonly ask is the "what" question—what subjects shall we teach?

I have no quarrel with the what or how or why questions. But none of them opens up the territory I want to explore: the inner landscape of the teaching self.

To chart that landscape fully, three important paths must be taken—intellectual, emotional, and spiritual—and none can be ignored.

Reduce teaching to intellect, and it becomes a cold abstraction; reduce it to emotions, and it becomes narcissistic; reduce it to the spiritual, and it loses its anchor to the world.

Intellect, emotion, and spirit depend on one another for wholeness. They are interwoven in the human self and in education at its best."

For Math, Factor in **Attitude**

Innovator:
David Drew

Job:
Chair of the education faculty, professor of education and executive management, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, California

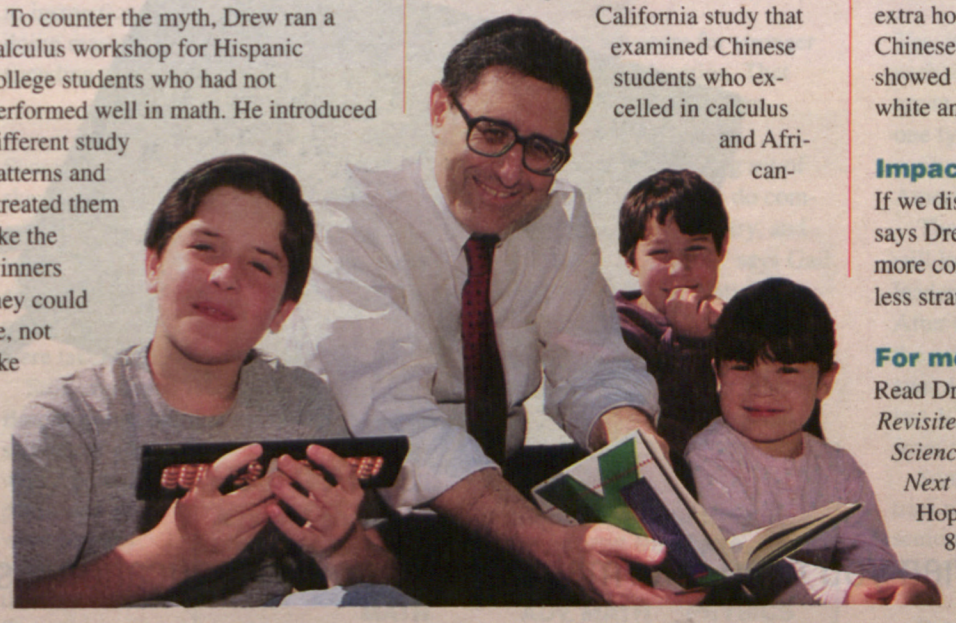
Bright Idea:
When it comes to math skills, the attitude that "some have it, some just don't" doesn't add up, says Drew.

People who are expected to be poor math students will become bad at math. And since stereotypes hold that women and most minorities are bad at math, the math myth has "perpetuated and exacerbated the inequalities within our society," Drew adds.

To counter the myth, Drew ran a calculus workshop for Hispanic college students who had not performed well in math. He introduced different study patterns and "treated them like the winners they could be, not like helpless losers." In the end, these students registered dramatically higher math scores.

To bolster his argument, Drew points to a University of California study that examined Chinese students who excelled in calculus and African-American students who did not.

When the African-American students participated in a workshop that introduced high expectations, long study hours, work groups, and extra homework—elements of the Chinese students' success—the study showed that they actually outscored white and Asian counterparts.



Bob Riha, Jr.

Impact:
If we dismiss "the aptitude excuse," says Drew, the sum total could be a more competitive work force and a less stratified society.

For more:
Read Drew's book *Aptitude Revisited: Rethinking Math and Science Education for America's Next Century* ($35.95, Johns Hopkins University Press, 800/537-5487) or E-mail Drew at david.drew@cgu.edu.

'It's Time To End the **Reading Wars'**

The National Academy of Sciences recently released a landmark study on reading development, with recommendations for putting the findings into action in schools and homes. Catherine Snow, professor at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, chaired the study.

Who wins in the debate between phonics and whole language?
It's time to end the reading wars. Reading is such a complex and multifaceted activity, no single method is the answer.

Scott Suchman

Three basic elements build good readers:

- Children need to understand the alphabetic writing system—that words have letters and that letters relate to sounds.
- They need opportunities to use reading to obtain meaning from print.
- They need frequent chances to practice their skills to achieve fluency.

Children should be encouraged to sound out unfamiliar words. They should use context and pictures as tools for monitoring word recognition, not as substitutes for paying attention to letter-sound relationships.

To promote comprehension, curriculums should include instruction in summarizing the main idea, predicting events, and drawing inferences.

Children need time to write every day. Invented and traditional spelling can co-exist—with the former helping children understand the sounds created by different letter combinations.

Why aren't so many third graders reading at grade level?
Home and child-care settings where there's little emphasis on language and literacy development put children at risk for reading difficulties. So we need the will to ensure that every child has access to excellent preschool environments and well-prepared teachers.

Teacher-education curriculums and certification requirements should encompass key, research-based concepts about reading.

And all teachers need ongoing professional development and continuing opportunities for mentoring by and collaboration with reading specialists.

What about children with limited English?
The report says children should first learn reading skills in their home language—where they can best figure out the meaning of words and sentences. If that's not possible, children should have the chance to develop reasonable proficiency in oral English before they begin reading instruction.

What's ahead?
We recommend expansion of affordable preschool programs that focus on social, language, and cognitive development. We need more pediatricians, social workers, and other health professionals to join efforts to promote reading. Child-oriented organizations and government agencies should create a public service campaign—targeted toward parents, care givers, and others—explaining how youngsters learn to read.

A draft of the National Academy of Sciences report, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, *is available for $45 (plus $4 s&h) from the National Academy Press, 800/624-6242. On the Web at www.nap.edu. The final version will be released in June.*

Ways To **Resolve Conflict**

Schools and communities can work together to create environments that help students learn to resolve conflicts peacefully. Linda Lantieri of New York's Resolving Conflict Creatively Program offers these starting points:

- Support local mediation centers as a way of dealing with neighborhood disputes. Have peer mediators and school mediation coaches volunteer their expertise.
- Cooperate with local media by helping them report on positive events happening in schools.
- Invite local policymakers, police, and judges to participate in school celebrations as well as in conflict resolution training.
- Consider using the school's facilities as a community center, collaborating with non-profit organizations to provide safe, stimulating opportunities for kids after school.
- Support the idea of school-based health clinics, which can reinforce violence prevention programming.

Source: "Waging Peace in Our Schools," *Reaching Today's Youth* (Fall 1996 issue), $12, 800/733-6786.

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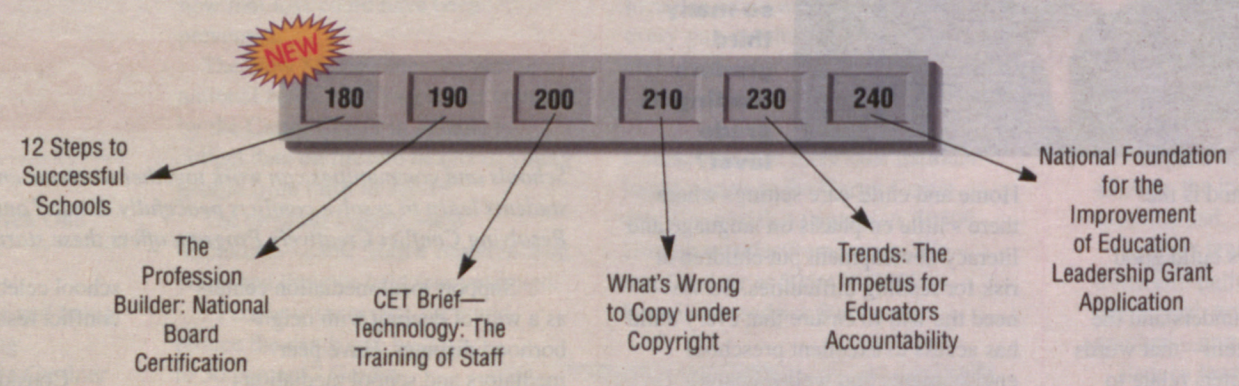

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Inside Scoop

The International Test Scores Are In . . .

Can it be true—American students scoring near the bottom of the international barrel for math and science? Some 10,000 U.S. seniors from more than 200 public and private high schools recently took part in the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS). When the scores were released in February, the United States on average didn't get any gold medals.

What exactly is 'TIMSS'?

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study is big—the most comprehensive worldwide study of student achievement to date. A total of some half million students, from five different grade levels and in more than 40 countries, were tested on a variety of topics to produce the most recent round of scores.

American education and political leaders are up in arms over the results from high school seniors in the areas of math, advanced math, physics, and math and science literacy.

Compared with students from the 21 countries participating in these fields (Japan and China chose not to join in), the United States ranked below or close to average (see chart at right).

What's caused the great divide?

Different reasons have been bandied about. High on the list: an indifference to science and math education.

"The United States ranks near the bottom on schoolchildren's knowledge of math and science because our society is not committed to the importance of learning these subjects," says Ulric Nesser, a Cornell University psychologist and head of a recent American Psychological Association task force on human intelligence.

In the United States, only 10 percent of high school graduates have taken calculus and 25 percent have taken physics.

In fact, of those American seniors participating in this study, only one-third were taking a math class at the time of the test, and more than half were not enrolled in a science class.

But the high-scoring Scandinavian countries showed similar enrollment figures.

So what have other countries got that we haven't?

More intensive math and science curriculums, for one.

The TIMSS study reports that high scores on the math tests were related to instructional activities that involved doing reasoning tasks frequently and spending time solving equations.

Was the playing field level?

Scores from other studies have been skewed in the past because other countries selected only top students, while U.S. classrooms sent a more egalitarian mix. But TIMSS researchers note that such disparities were taken into account this time.

Still, education researcher Gerald Bracey points out that countries did self-select who would participate—and some were perhaps more selective than the United States.

So do our students need to hit the books?

Sure—except that the books may be part of the problem.

"We have the fattest textbooks in the world," says Marc Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy—but these books may be focused more on sales than substance.

"In this country, curriculum is constructed not by ministries or state departments of education but by textbook publishers who send salesmen around to talk to teachers and ask them what should be in the books," says Tucker. "Since they want to sell textbooks with the largest appeal, they put everything in, in a kind of smorgasbord approach."

Do low scores reflect something kids are doing?

Can't blame television this time, at least not in a comparative sense. All students who participated in the TIMSS study spent about an equal amount of time plunked in front of a TV set.

But the study does point out that more American students work at paid jobs. More than one-third work, compared with less than one-fifth of students tested in other countries.

How can we get our students out of the cellar?

Educators can advocate for stronger math and science education. That means boosting the curriculum—before the high school level.

"We need to have a strong set of standards that demand kids do complex math—algebra, geometry, and statistics in middle school," says Gail Burrill, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

NEA President Bob Chase has called for improving teacher education programs in universities. And he's emphasized the need to continue the professionalization of the teaching profession, so that more math and science experts will be attracted to the classroom.

Indeed, there is a shortage of qualified math and science teachers. Some 28 percent of high school math teachers and 18 percent of high school science teachers didn't major or minor in the subject they now teach.

Education Secretary Richard Riley is currently pushing for a $60 million increase in federal funding to improve math teaching.

How It All Adds Up

A recent study of 12th graders in 21 countries produced math and science scores that have U. S. educators worried.

	MATH	ADV. MATH	PHYSICS
Above average	Netherlands Sweden Denmark Switzerland Iceland Norway	France Russia Switzerland Denmark Cyprus Lithuania	Norway Sweden Russia Denmark
Close to average	Italy Russia Lithuania Czech Rep. U.S.	Australia Greece Sweden Canada Slovenia Italy	Slovenia Germany Australia Cyprus Latvia Greece
Below average	Cyprus So. Africa	Czech Rep. Germany U.S. Austria	Switzerland Canada France Czech Rep. Austria U.S.

Source: Third International Mathematics and Science Study

Karen Loeb

Doesn't good old American ingenuity count for anything?

Yes, it does. Education eminences such as Harvard's Howard Gardner argue that these scores only reflect one type of thinking—and not necessarily the creativity and ingenuity that Americans are known for.

These thinkers note that the world still looks to the United States as a leader in science and engineering. After all, one-fourth to one-third of all the science and engineering doctorates awarded in the United States over the last 10 years have gone to students from other countries.

Some experts add that other countries may gear up their high school seniors, but it's at the university level that American students strut their stuff.

But let's not forget the blinding effect of good old American hubris. Despite scoring low on the TIMSS tests, 70 percent of the American students tested believed they did well.

Do these test scores spell the decline of American society?

A few years ago, education critics decried low test scores as a bellwether for the country's faltering economy. Now we've got low test scores—and a booming economy. Go figure.

The TIMSS test scores stand in contrast to rising SAT scores and better performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

What's more, U.S. fourth graders taking the TIMSS test ranked among the highest in the world. And U.S. scores overall have actually improved over the years. But "the world is not standing still," notes the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and other countries have improved even more.

All these factors indicate that scores are only part of a bigger picture.

The TIMSS scores present American educators with an opportunity to argue for stronger support for math and science education. And voters are now primed to hear the call. Because no one likes coming in last.

—Leona Hiraoka

Need More Information?

■ *Attaining Excellence: A TIMSS Resource Kit* provides studies, discussion guides, and videos designed to help educators and citizens use TIMSS results to improve education. $94. Contact the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954, 202/512-1800, Fax 202/512-2250. E-mail: orders@gpo.gov. Material can be downloaded from the Web at www.ed.gov/NCES/timss. For more on TIMSS, visit timss.enc.org.

Students &

Good Stuff

Single-Sex Schools
Separated by Sex: A Critical Look at Single-Sex Education for Girls, from the American Association of University Women, examines the findings of the foremost educational scholars on single-sex education in grades K-12 to discover if girls learn better apart from boys. The report includes a literature review and a summary of a forum convened by the AAUW Educational Foundation that considers what role single-sex classes and schools should play in national educational reform. 108 pp., $11.95 for NEA members ($12.95 for non-members) from the NEA Professional Library, stock #2505-9-00-F. Call 800/229-4200 to order.

The Ad and the Ego
This 57-minute video offers a comprehensive examination of advertising and the culture of consumption in the United States. As media critics comment on clips from hundreds of television ads, it becomes clear that ads sell not only products, but also values, concepts of love and success, a sense of identity, and a sense of what's "normal." $70 from California Newsreel, 149 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103, 800/621-6196. E-mail newsreel@ix.netcom.com or visit the Web at www.newsreel.org.

Children and Trauma
Students are traumatized every day by personal life crises and events around them. In *Trauma in the Lives of Children: Crisis and Stress Management Techniques for Counselors, Teachers, and Other Professionals* (second edition), Kendall Johnson provides guidelines for recognizing the early stages of traumatization and offers direct ways to intervene before any negative impact has taken root. 346 pp., $19.95 from Hunter House, P.O. Box 2914, Alameda, CA 94501, 510/865-5282, Fax 510/865-4295.

Free Tale
In *Son-Rise: The Miracle Continues*, Barry Neil Kaufman recounts how his son, diagnosed as "profoundly autistic," developed into an active, verbal youngster through the family's undaunted, unconditional love and attention. The non-profit Option Institute is offering a free copy of the book to educators. Call 800/71-HAPPY to order.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"Buses arrive on time–10 minutes before the morning bell–but the students still need to eat breakfast."

Barb Topham, elementary school looper, Portland, Oregon

Dilemma

On Public Display

Ted Pitts

How do you prove to the public that you're doing a good job?

There are several successful methods I use in my classroom to prove that students are learning.

- Assign homework and challenging activities that require parents and other family members to get actively involved.
- Display student projects throughout the school, and advertise them in various community stores.
- Announce specific projects and products in the local newspaper and monthly school bulletin.
- Hold frequent academic exhibitions throughout the school year and open them to the public.

Queen Miles
Fourth grade social studies and science teacher
Warren, Arkansas

Grades show that some individual students are learning. But when you focus on all children, you have to look deeper.

Children show signs that the learning process has been achieved. They respond to you in class with excitement. They want to participate. They're eager to know what's next.

If you need to prove this to the public, let them see your class. Let them participate in a day of activities—not a special day, but a regular day. They can see the children actively learning.

We say children learn best by doing. The best way for the public to learn about the job we're doing is by participating.

Barbara Herod-Hence
Sixth grade math teacher
Water Valley, Mississippi

I work with special education students, and norm-referenced, multiple-choice, standardized tests don't always prove the reliability of my students' learned skills.

So I use many different types of performance assessment tools. One is portfolio assessments. This more comprehensive method of showing student growth in many targeted skills or subjects is especially effective with special needs students.

This approach has helped me—and community members—understand what a student has gained.

And it works not only for special education students, but for children from diverse cultural backgrounds as well.

Phil Carlson
Elementary teacher
West Palm Beach, Florida

Get your students to write for publication. Submit their work to literary contests, local newspapers, and the free magazines distributed in your area.

Nothing impresses the public—and testifies to your competence—more than seeing their children's work, names, and pictures in print. Parents think you're wonderful, and students sing the praises of their school—it's magic!

One of our students will have his essay published in a new edition of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and three others have had their opinions featured in *Parade* magazine this year.

Kathy Megyeri
High school English teacher
Sandy Spring, Maryland

Extracurricular teachers can exhibit awards won by students. As a debate coach, I travel to more than 15 tournaments a year. I can show a wealth of awards that my students have won individually and collectively—not just trophies, but scholarships and cash.

I can also point to student and parent involvement in the program.

Student officers recruit and train judges for all the tournaments we attend. The publicist sends press releases to area newspapers, television stations, and district media sources.

The Boosters organize our annual awards banquet and fundraiser. Booster officers also speak during our back-to-school night, and they tell other parents how much the program has helped their own children.

Todd Murray
High school director of forensics
Jenks, Oklahoma

Got an Answer?

What do you do with students who don't complete their assignment in time for recess or a party?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org**.

Respondents published here will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug!

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"A parent thanks you for helping the youngest of eight children be the first in the family to graduate."

Alan Schultz, high school biology teacher, Ogden, Utah

Delight

Take a Look at 'DIS'

It's a no-nonsense program that helps disruptive students keep cool—and educators keep lessons on track.

In Fairfax County, Virginia, all students get two messages loud and clear: don't mess with the integrity of the learning environment, and disrespect will meet with discipline every time it occurs.

Students know that the district-wide DIS (Disrespect Involving Students) program, developed by the Fairfax Education Association, provides educators with a non-bureaucratic means of removing disruptive individuals from the classroom quickly.

Most schools have created a time-out room to which teachers may send students—an efficient process that minimizes the loss of instructional class time.

The time-out room is staffed by monitors, often instructional assistants, whose role is to give students an environment where they can cool down and face up to the need to get back on task. In most schools, the monitor doesn't counsel, tutor, or discipline the students. Interaction is kept to a minimum.

"Sensory deprivation is too strong a term," says Sherry Leavitt, an English teacher at James Madison High School in Vienna. "But we do seek a neutral environment."

Upon arrival, students are asked to fill out a form asking them to describe the behavior that landed them there. "I don't know" or "nothing" aren't acceptable answers.

"We expect students in the time-out room to calm down, engage in some reflection, and maybe come to see that no one person has the right to deprive others of the chance to learn," says Leavitt.

"The critical point is that exile to the time-out room is not primarily a punitive measure," Leavitt adds. "It's protective—protective of all students' right to an environment that facilitates learning."

Barbara Allen, a special education resource teacher at Walt Whitman, notes that the time-out room, while effective as a remedy, also serves as a deterrent.

"The kids know it's there—and they don't want to go," says Allen. "There's no socializing. And, later, there's missed coursework to make up."

"I think of the time-out room as a safety net," says Kathy Bajek, a fourth grade teacher at Hunters Woods Elementary School in Reston. "It's comforting knowing it's there, knowing that I can maintain the continuity of instruction despite occasional attempts to disrupt it."

Bajek emphasizes that DIS doesn't replace an effective classroom management program.

"It's an additional tool," she says. "It gives us another means of delivering the message that there will be swift consequences for unacceptable behavior. And any behavior that interferes with learning is unacceptable."

Staff members have been overwhelmingly supportive of the Disrespect Involving Students program. At Walt Whitman Intermediate School, support was so strong that before receiving DIS funding for a room monitor, teachers arranged their schedules so that they could staff the time-out room themselves.

The county has since allocated $1.5 million for schools to create their own DIS strategies for the current school year.

"In a little over two years," says Yvonne Jukes, president of the Fairfax Education Association, "this program has made a marked difference. DIS has become part of character education. And, more than ever before, our students understand that respect is a requirement."

For More Information

Contact Yvonne Jukes at the Fairfax Education Association, 703/352-7300, or E-mail feaprez@aol.com.

Joe Di Dio

Virginia teacher Sherry Leavitt uses the DIS room to help disruptive students get back on track—and protect other students' right to a productive learning environment.

Idea Exchange

Dropping In, Not Out

I'm an instructional assistant at an elementary school that feeds a high school with a high dropout rate. Our students don't see college as an option.

The teacher I work with and I came up with a plan that we hope helps students understand that staying in school is an option.

First, we had our students perform a mock debate. One side argued for staying in school, and the other argued against. I was called as a witness, since I go to school full time (studying bilingual education), work, and receive financial aid.

My colleague and I felt this wasn't enough, so we're planning a field trip to the university I attend. A professor friend is more than willing to have this class visit one of hers, so students can see that higher education is attainable.

We also will meet with student aid officers to discuss scholarships, grants, and loans. Since 99 percent of the students in our class are of Hispanic descent, we are planning to meet with the campus Hispanic organizations.

I can't wait to see these students experience a college classroom—something a lot of us take for granted!

Claire Metelits
Phoenix, Arizona

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7201, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

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- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me @list.nea.org.

Professional

Good Stuff

Grants for Technology
Millions of dollars of federal grant money are available for new or existing programs that provide technology training for educators to improve instruction. The Technology Innovation Challenge Grant focuses on areas with a high percentage or number of children living below the poverty line. Deadline for applying: May 29. For more information and an application, visit the Web at www.ed.gov/Technology/chalgrnt.html. Or contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Suite 522, Washington, DC 20208-5544, 202/208-3882, E-mail: elizabeth_payer@ed.gov.

Read the Standards
Learn more about National Board certification by reading up on the standards. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards offers documents discussing the standards in the 15 fields that it now certifies. $15 for each field document. To order, call 800/22TEACH.

Professional Link
In *Making the Link: Teacher Professional Development on the Internet*, Ron Owston demonstrates how the Internet can be a powerful professional development tool based on two basic strategies: building virtual professional communities through mailing lists and newsgroups, and efficiently researching Web sites and bibliographic databases. 175 pp., $24 from Heinemann, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, CT 96881, 800/793-2154, Fax 800/847-0938. On the Web at www.heinemann.com.

Conflict Resolution
Educators for Social Responsibility will be conducting conflict resolution workshops for educators from all grade levels this summer. Topics include teaching conflict resolution in middle and high school, developing emotional intelligence through classroom management, and teaching conflict resolution through literature. Workshops will be held in Chicago and throughout Massachusetts. Registration fees for the one- to three-day workshops range from $115 to $285. For a complete schedule, contact ESR, 23 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138, 800/370-2515, Fax 617/864-5164.

You know you have a problem when . . .
"Teachers leave early, test scores go down, and membership in the Association drops."
Gwen Morris, eighth grade language arts teacher, Fayetteville, North Carolina

Dilemma

It Takes a Team

How do you build cooperation between teachers and support staff?

Ted Pitts

Unity is essential to the learning process and the bargaining process in our district.

Linda Hughes, the president of the education support personnel local, and I represent two different bargaining units. But by maintaining contact at monthly board meetings and sharing vital bargaining information, we present a united front.

My local Association also includes support employees in all our appreciation activities—not just during American Education Week, but throughout the year.

We couldn't do without the support staff—as Association members or as instructional partners—and we try to let them know as often as possible.

Lori Pearson
First/second grade Title I reading teacher
Catoosa, Oklahoma

In 1995, my local, the Abington Secretaries/Aides Association, and the teachers' Association were both negotiating contracts.

My local held a breakfast at my home and invited the officers and negotiating team of the teachers' group. At the breakfast, we explored ways to cooperate and communicate about tactics during negotiations. We also agreed to share information on experiences with grievances and other issues.

There's nothing like breaking bread together to make everyone feel welcome and comfortable.

Together we participated in collective bargaining meetings at our district field house. Because of our unique circumstances, we also communicated freely with both the professional and support staff field reps.

Our collaboration has continued, even after negotiations.

In 1996-97, the staff at Abington Junior High School formed a steering committee to plan the implementation of a grant from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. Teachers, department chairs, administrators, secretaries, aides, and parents served on the committee.

We are in the first exciting year of implementation, and we're planning to have secretaries and aides work with teachers to manage a corps of student technology coaches.

Hope this helps to break down barriers. It was frightening at first. But we are committed to making it work.

Daryl Baer Rowland
Receptionist
Abington, Pennsylvania

One thing that brought us closer together was when the district was considering subcontracting several of the services provided by our classified staff. We rallied round at the budget committee and board hearings to save those positions. And we were successful.

Other things we do here:

- We join forces in "honoring" or "treating" each other on ESP Day and National Teacher Day.
- We try to maintain a joint political action committee.
- As president, I go around to the buildings with my "Expresso" wagon and meet all members personally. The mugs that hold that espresso have both our logos on them.

Chris Nelson
High school physical education teacher
Albany, Oregon

One of our inclusive locals recently showed its appreciation for support personnel members in a big way. North Hunterdon Regional High School held a holiday staff party—but of course, the second and third shift custodians couldn't attend.

So the local ordered food to be delivered to the two high schools that night. One school just wanted desserts, and the other one got a fancy meal prepared by the culinary arts teacher. The staff was very appreciative.

Jude Mahon
High school English teacher
Glen Gardner, New Jersey

Got an Answer?

How do you get quality feedback when the principal doesn't provide it?
Send your answer by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Include your name, educational position, and phone numbers.

Published respondents will receive a bright new *NEA Today* mug!

Growth

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Your colleagues start asking you to solve their contract negotiation problems *with* them instead of *for* them."

Charlene Hansen, middle school world cultures teacher, Moses Lake, Washington

Delight

Training Knows No Bounds

Washington teachers and support staff train from a common curriculum that they help to create.

Every year, the 2,500 school employees in the Lake Washington school district get a thick catalog filled with professional development courses on issues such as inclusion, CPR, the Internet, office practices, and desktop publishing.

Nearly 100 percent of the educators participate in the training program. And all are welcome to take any course—there's no divide between "certified" and "classified" coursework.

"If we expect world-class learning among our students, we must ensure lifelong learning among staff," says Lake Washington Education Association President Kevin Teeley.

The Association has collaborated with the school district to develop of this program, working out contract issues and serving in an advisory capacity.

All staff in Lake Washington get 11 release days a year for professional development activities. And 16 full-time certified and classified employees receive release time to work in the district's development office for three to five years.

In addition, a staff advisory committee of 32 employees formally assesses the development program, then reports its findings to the Lake Washington School Board.

To determine what courses to offer, the district's professional development office examines an annual survey of staff and an annual student body profile that details student strengths and weaknesses.

"No program could be more responsive to staff opinion," says Teeley.

The school district foots the bill for this comprehensive program, with the community's blessing. Some courses, such as information technology and parenting skills, are open to the community and often bring school staff and parents together.

Some development courses are job specific. Staff from the district's central office mentor secretaries on the intricacies of payroll regulations and annual leave policies. Novice teachers receive release time to visit the classrooms of veteran faculty.

Yet, overall, all educators get a chance to walk in any of their colleagues' professional development footsteps as they work together to improve education for their students.

"We all gain a lot from this program. But the benefits that staff receive take a back seat to the benefits students receive," says Beth Reisen, president of the Lake Washington ESP.

"The public we serve understands that staff development improves student achievement," adds Reisen.

"We need a districtwide learning community," says Teeley, "one that's inspiring to all and demanding of all."

For More Information

Contact LWEA President Kevin Teeley or LWESP Past-President Sheila Hagerman at 425/885-7222.

Dan DeLong

At Christa McAuliffe Elementary School, head secretary Judi Nason (far right) observes a literature circle group led by fourth grade teacher Valerie Marshall (left). Nason is active in developing Lake Washington's extensive staff training program.

Idea Exchange

New Ways To Exchange

I am a special education teacher, and I've found a valuable service on the Internet.

Teacher's House, a directory of teachers, is unlike other chat services where you have to enter chat rooms and wade through hundreds of messages and people. This service informs me when my contacts (identified through the directory) are online.

I talk only to educators I've specifically added to my contact list. My queries are answered directly and quickly.

NEA members interested in Teacher's House can download free software from www.mirabilis.com or from www.kappiti.co.nz/lance.

Jesse Kushner
Prince William County, Virginia

When students in my Spanish class move away, I give them stamped, addressed envelopes. I tell them to wait a month to get acclimated to their new surroundings and then write to me about how they're faring in Spanish at the new school.

Students tell me about vocabulary, verb tenses, how much oral work is used, and more.

This information is valuable, since Spanish is taught from many different textbooks by teachers using many approaches.

Anita Halfhill-Abbott
Uniontown, Pennsylvania

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7201, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list. nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me @list.nea.org.

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

I have 28 computers in my classroom. How can I turn students' original artwork, done in the Paintbrush program, into "wallpaper"—the Windows background? I'd like each machine to showcase a different student's work.

What a great idea! If you have Windows 3.1, here are the steps to turn your students' artwork into wallpaper:

- Save each student's image as a BMP, GIF, JPEG, or TIFF file into one directory on each computer.
- Open *Desktop* from the *Control Panel* (*Main* group).
- In the *Wallpaper* option, go to the drop-down *File* list and highlight the name of the student's image file.
- Choose *Center* or *Tile*—which repeats the artwork in small blocks across the screen. Click on *OK*.

My school's librarian is always surprising me with useful copies of timely articles from magazines that cross her desk. Can I use this material in my class without violating copyright law?

Oops—no, you can't. The piece of copyright law that applies here is known as "Fair Use," which explains under what conditions copyrighted material may be copied and used.

Fair use is determined by four main factors: purpose and character of the copying, nature of the work being copied, amount and substantiality of the portion copied, and effect on the potential market or value of the original work.

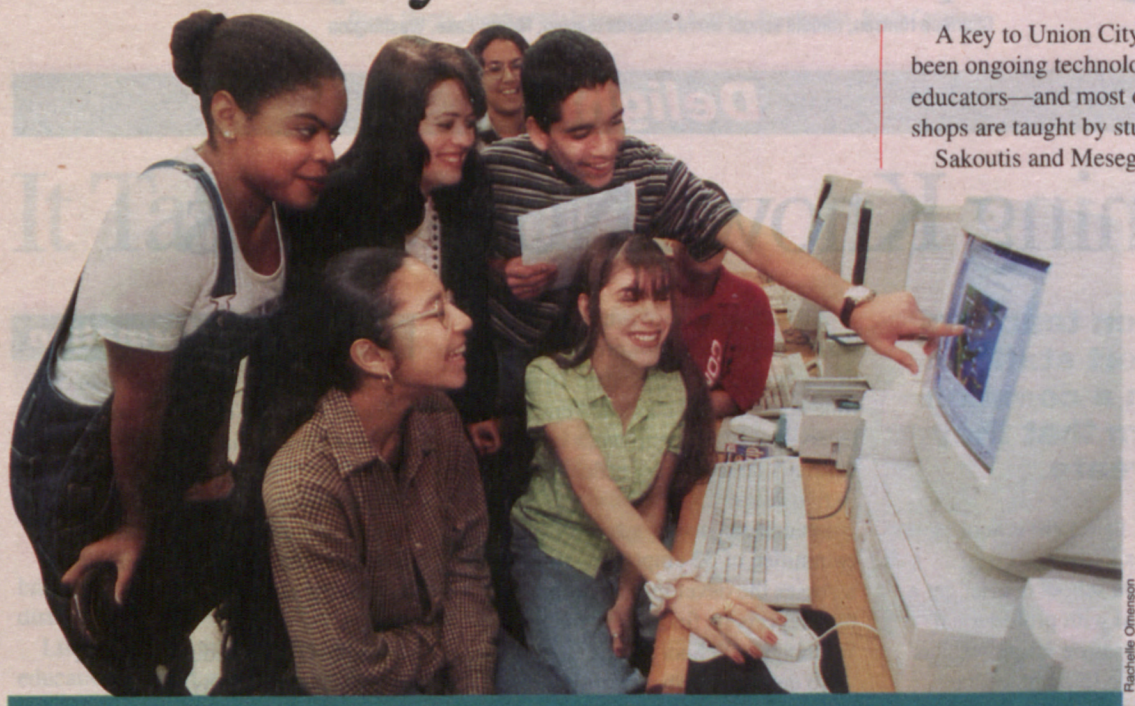
The "purpose and character of the copying" allows that "A single copy may be made by or for a teacher at his or her individual request for his or her scholarly research or use in teaching or preparation to teach a class."

Your librarian's actions fall outside of "fair use" because *you* didn't request the copies of the articles.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet on the Web for more questions from beginners and answers from the experts.

Friendly User

Union City Passes the Test



Rachelle Omenson

For a unit on the weather, New Jersey teacher Ela Meseguer helps students E-mail scientists, track weather in other countries via the Internet, and graph their findings in Excel spreadsheets.

Who:
Ela Meseguer, science teacher, Columbus Middle School, and Mary Ann Sakoutis, history teacher, Emerson High School, Union City, New Jersey

E-mail:
emeseguer@union-city.k12.nj.us and msakoutis@union-city.k12.nj.us

What:
In America's most urban city, test scores have done a turnaround, thanks to a reformed curriculum infused with technology.

Inspiration:
In 1989, threatened with a state takeover due to low test scores, Union City school employees set about reforming their curriculum for a student population characterized by low-income families, high mobility, and limited English skills.

Textbooks and lectures were replaced with a whole language philosophy that emphasizes an interdisciplinary curriculum, cooperative learning—and an extensive influx of technology.

"Today's students are media-minded," explains Sakoutis. "You can't use 1890s methods of teaching in a 1990s classroom. It just doesn't work."

District budget increases brought an array of high-tech tools, including 3,000 computers for the district's 9,000 students.

The reform appears to be working. For eighth graders, state reading test scores went from the 33rd percentile to the 86th—equal to scores for kids in New Jersey suburbs. California Achievement Test reading scores for fourth graders went from the 49th percentile to the 86th.

For inner-city kids, says NEA member Fred Carrigg, the district's director of curriculum and instruction, technology is the great equalizer educators have been looking for.

Lesson:
For veteran teachers Meseguer and Sakoutis, reform included a fundamental change in their roles.

"I'm a guide for students, a mentor," Meseguer explains. "I don't just teach science. I teach reading, writing, geography, technology—anything I can incorporate into the sciences."

Sakoutis teaches history in proficiency-based, technology-oriented, 80-minute blocks. Students use the Internet and the classroom's well-stocked CD-ROM and video library to explore a topic, then teach the material to their peers through presentations. Only if there are gaps in the presentations does Sakoutis step in and lecture—or as she says, "elaborate."

A key to Union City's reform has been ongoing technology training for educators—and most of these workshops are taught by students.

Sakoutis and Meseguer easily see the link between technology and test scores.

Using E-mail has improved writing skills, Meseguer notes, while Sakoutis says students are always pushing to do more, to use technology to dig deeper into a topic.

"The more you read, the better your scores are going to be," Sakoutis says.

Meseguer agrees: "You see students learning beyond what's required of them—and beyond the hours required of them."

For instance, Meseguer and a half-dozen students give up their lunch period every day to work on extra computer skills, such as designing Web sites.

And for kids with computers at home, the learning day never ends. Meseguer recently sat up till 11:30 p.m., exchanging E-mails with an excited student who had just cracked a problem that had stumped them both—how to integrate a sound file into a Powerpoint presentation.

Click:
Students aren't the only ones captivated by technology.

"I feel a door opening," Sakoutis says. "When I was stifled inside the covers of a book, it was easy. Everything was there for me—teacher's guide, sample tests.

"Now, it's so freeing," she continues. "Anything I can think of that adds to a kid's learning is open to me."

For More Information

Take a virtual tour of Union City Public Schools on the Web, at www.union-city.k12.nj.us.

Click Here

Cutting Edge Conference

You can see the latest educational hardware and software and learn how colleagues are integrating technology into classroom activities at the 12th Annual Technology + Learning Conference, October 29-31, in Nashville, Tennessee.

NEA, which cosponsors the event with the National School Boards Association, will have its own center at the conference, with nine workshops and two roundtable discussions designed especially for NEA members— plus plenty of opportunities for members to network and share ideas.

B.J. Yentzer from NEA's Center for Education Technology explains why this is one conference you really shouldn't miss.

Who should attend?

If you're already using technology in your teaching and want some fresh ideas to take you to the next step, the Technology + Learning Conference is for you. Last year, over half of the registrants were teachers, librarians/media specialists, and technology coordinators.

What will educators get out of the conference?

The conference emphasizes practical advice and instruction for integrating technology in your teaching. For instance, you can learn how students are using such software programs as Hyperstudio to develop electronic portfolios. Or you'll hear how teachers are working with their school districts to develop effective technology plans.

And you'll be up-to-date with the newest education technology after touring the exhibit area.

What special sessions has NEA planned?

NEA members from Page High School and next-door-neighbor Page Middle School in Franklin, Tennessee, will present workshops describing how they provide a continuum of technology-infused projects to students in grades 6-12, such as environmental programs in cooperation with the Cumberland Science Museum.

Among other NEA sessions, Tennessee teacher Kathy Bryant, a popular presenter last year, will describe step-by-step techniques for incorporating technology into the elementary school day.

How much does it cost?

That's the best part. As an NEA member, you're entitled to a special conference rate of $235—more than half off the regular registration fee of $495.

How can I learn more?

Check NEA's Web site at www.nea.org/cet for more details, or call NEA's Teaching + Learning Conference Fax-on-Demand line, at 703/531-2224, to have information faxed right to you. For a registration brochure, call 202/822-7752.

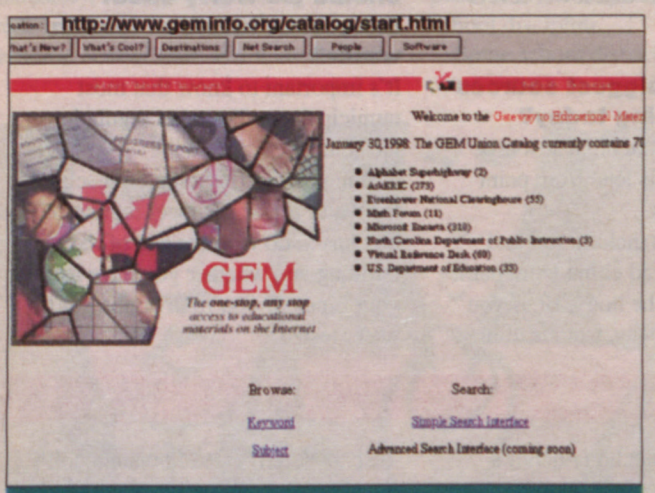
Research Update

How do kids relate school to their future? Drexel University recently asked 2001 teens what they thought. Among the findings:

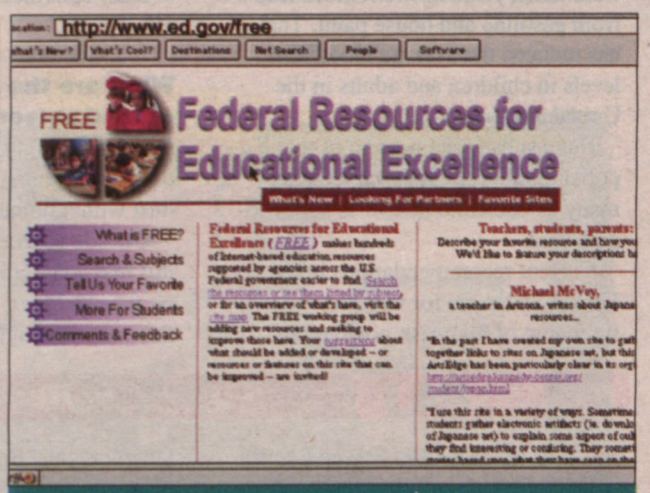
- *Work-related skills that kids rated as extremely valuable include working well as part of a team, being able to use a computer, and communicating effectively orally and in writing.*
- *Students named math and English as the high school subjects most important to future careers.*
- *About 60 percent rate their computer skills as better than good, but not excellent, and 78 percent have computers in their homes.*

A survey summary can be found at www.drexel.edu/univrel/FuturePoll/FuturePoll.html.

Screen Shots



www.geminfo.org/Catalog/start.html
The Gateway to Educational Materials is your one-stop source for educational materials. NEA, along with NEA affiliates in Kentucky and Connecticut, will soon offer this valuable tool on their Web sites!



www.ed.gov/free
Hundreds of teaching and learning resources from more than 30 federal agencies are gathered at the Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) Web site.

New & Noteworthy

Online Job Service

SCRIBE, a new online service from the National Association of Secondary School Principals, links high school students and graduates in search of jobs with potential employers.

For a $10 fee, students can post a record of their work and academic experience on the SCRIBE site. Employers can post job announcements, and both can search the site for matches. Go to www.scribenet.org for details.

Live Chat with Teachers

Consult with teachers from around the world for advice and ideas. Vist the Teacher's House Web site at www.kapiti.co.nz/lance/ to download the free ICQ Chat software that supports one-to-one conferencing. Then search the site's database to find someone to chat with.

Grant Writing Help

If your school needs some help with grant proposals, get a copy of the *User-Friendly Guide to Writing Grant Proposals*. This software has 31 writing prompts that result in a finished proposal. $69.95. Call 800/655-5597 to order, or fax your order to Capital Publications at 800/392-7886.

Internet Guide

Your Key to the Internet, a new CD-ROM from Classroom Connect, covers how to use E-mail, search engines, bookmarks, and newsgroups. There's also a glossary of Internet terms.

Available in Mac or Windows format for either Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Explorer. $19.99. Call 800/638-1639 to order.

Spending Simulation

High school students can learn money management skills on the Escape from Knab site, at www.escapefromknab.com. Participants have to go through the simulation of making several financial decisions, after which they discover the results of those decisions.

Technology News

eSchool News bills itself as the "K-12 technology and Internet decision makers' #1 news source." Go to the eSchool News site at www.eschoolnews.com for articles about technology and the Internet geared for educators.

Health

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice means that all people should have an opportunity to live in a healthy environment. All people should be able to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and consume uncontaminated foods. In response to NEA member requests for information on this topic, the NEA Health Information Network has created a free brochure, *Environmental Justice and the Indoor Environments.* Call 800/418-4318 to order.

Occupational Safety

Every year, some 200,000 American adolescent workers are injured on the job—and 64,000 require emergency treatment. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Children's Safety Network have developed *Safe Work/Safe Workers: A Guide for Teaching High School Students about Occupational Safety and Health*, a three-hour curriculum and video that engages students through peer discussion and hands-on learning activities. $30 plus $5 s&h. Call 800/793-5076 and order item #5695.

Battling Tobacco

Smoking among eighth and tenth graders has increased by 50 percent since 1991. Twenty percent of high school boys now use spit tobacco. To protect students from the tobacco industry, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids has created the National Action Network. To get involved, call 800/284-KIDS or visit the Web at www.tobaccofreekids.org.

Pet Safety

More than half of all children have been bitten by a dog before they're 12. *Fido: Friend or Foe?*, a new dog-bite prevention activity book designed by two students, teaches kids ages 5-9 about pet safety. Contact your local State Farm Insurance office for a free copy. For more information on kids and pet safety, contact the American Veterinary Medicine Association at 800/248-AVMA.

Lead to the Source

Dr. Robert Henkens, professor emeritus of chemistry and deputy director of the Marine Biomedical Center at Duke University, is the founder of AndCare, Inc., a company that has developed a low-cost test for lead poisoning. He spoke recently with Christine Luong of the NEA Health Information Network.

What effect does lead have on children?

Anything above 10 micrograms per deciliter of lead in blood will produce adverse health effects in children.

All the health effects are neurological, except at the very highest levels—then it causes death.

At the lowest levels, what you'll likely see in children is a decreased attention span, a decrease in IQ, and a decrease in the ability to perform in various school tests.

What may happen to these children is that they will be worse students than they might otherwise have been—both in intellectual capacity and in other capacities, such as being able to sit still long enough to learn something.

Lead poisoning has gotten so much publicity in recent years. Do you still consider it to be a big problem?

That depends a bit on how you look at the problem.

Society considers lead poisoning to be less of a problem because steps were taken years ago to remove lead from gasoline and house paint. That has reduced the average blood lead levels in children and adults in the United States.

But a substantial portion of the population—estimates vary, but as many as one child in 10—is still lead-poisoned.

Current recommendations in the United States are for targeted screening of high-risk populations. The reasons for the current goals are complex. But in part they have been based on the cost of lead testing. I would assert that now that the cost has come way down, we should rethink the notion of universal screening.

Personally, I believe that screening only the high-risk children is wrong, because you're going to miss a lot of lead-poisoned kids.

What groups are most at risk for lead poisoning?

People who live in older homes, basically in the Northeast, from the rust belt to industrial cities like Chicago. People who are in a lower socioeconomic group or live in large metropolitan areas. And non-Hispanic Blacks.

Do children face greater risk from lead than adults?

Yes. Their neurological systems are developing, so they're more sensitive to lead. That means that lower levels affect them.

What are the biggest sources of lead poisoning today?

Overwhelmingly, the biggest source of lead poisoning is lead from paint dust within homes.

Outside sources include soil and dirt that contain lead either from paint on the outside of the house or, if you live next to a highway, from lead in the gasoline. Once lead is put down somewhere, it doesn't go away.

How about at schools?

Schools tend to be old buildings, which increases the likelihood of having lead-based paint. So if there's deteriorating paint of any kind, educators need to report it.

Older buildings also tend to have water fountains that have lead piping and lead soldering. And in some older water fountains, the containers that hold the water while it's being chilled are made of lead.

How do you know if your school or home has lead-based paint?

The only visual sign is deterioration of paint, or paint peeling off the walls or flaking off the walls, outside as well as in. The only other way of knowing is to have a test done, and there aren't many good tests.

You can buy tests in the drugstore, but I don't think many have proved to be terribly reliable.

Should we worry about dangerous levels of lead in water?

It's important to know that most municipal supplies meet regulations at the source.

But at the tap at home or at school, the water might not meet regulations—that has to do with the age of the building and whether you have lead in your pipes. If you're in doubt, get the water tested.

Resources

- July 12-18 is Lead Poison Control Week. To find out how to prevent lead poisoning in the home and school, call 800/LEAD-FYI (800/532-3394).
- For information on laboratories certified to test for lead in water and for filter information, contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800/426-4791.
- AndCare, Inc. is developing an innovative set of accurate and inexpensive monitoring kits to detect medical and environmental hazards. The FDA-approved LeadCare System tests children for lead poisoning. It's portable and simple to use—making it practical for physician's offices and small clinics, and for countries where much more expensive methods are not readily used or available. For more information, call 919/544-8220 or visit the Web at www.andcare.com.

Rights Watch

Drug Tests Coming Your Way?

Students are increasingly subject to mandatory drug tests. A court will soon decide if school staff will be, too.

To pee or not to pee. That is the question teachers in Tennessee and elsewhere may soon be facing.

In 1994, the Knox County (Tennessee) Board of Education adopted a policy that would have imposed suspicionless drug testing on potentially the entire school staff.

The Knox County Education Association took the board to court—and won. But now the board has appealed.

If the Knox County drug testing policy is upheld, it could prompt other school districts around the country to adopt similar programs.

Drug testing first burst onto the national scene in 1986, when then-President Reagan authorized federal agencies to test workers for drugs.

Three years later, the Supreme Court said that public employers—such as school districts—can't require employees to undergo random drug tests, unless they hold jobs that are "safety sensitive," that involve firearms and law enforcement, or that implicate "national security."

But the High Court has applied a different rule to the drug testing of minor students. Declaring that schools have a "compelling interest" in "deterring drug use by our Nation's schoolchildren," the Court approved mandatory, random drug testing for student athletes in the 1995 decision *Vernonia School Dist. 47J* v. *Acton*.

In upholding the Vernonia policy, the Court emphasized that:

- The school district had documented a serious drug problem among Vernonia student athletes.
- Students in general and athletes in particular have a "diminished expectation of privacy."
- Drug-impaired athletes pose a safety risk to themselves and others.
- School districts stand *in loco parentis* to school children, over whom they can exercise greater power and authority than over "free adults."

Encouraged by the Court's favorable ruling in *Acton*, a number of school districts have implemented student drug testing programs.

In August 1996, the Rush County (Indiana) School Board adopted a policy mandating random urinalysis exams for students who participate in any extracurricular activities. The mandatory tests check for drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.

Last January, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the Rush County policy, citing the *Acton* decision.

The court declared: "The plague of illicit drug use which currently threatens our nation's schools adds a major dimension to the difficulties the schools face in fulfilling their purpose —the education of our children."

Earlier this year, Florida's Miami-Dade County school district, the nation's fourth largest, implemented a "voluntary" student drug testing program that requires parental consent. Only the parents are informed of the test results, and a student who tests positive is not subject to any kind of school discipline.

Some school districts have also attempted to impose random or suspicionless drug testing on employees. But in the only three decisions on the question to date, courts in New York, Georgia, and the District of Columbia have held that suspicionless testing of teachers is unconstitutional under the Fourth Amendment.

The policy at issue in the Knox County case requires any person who applies for or is promoted to one of eight positions to be tested for some 18 illegal and prescription drugs, including codeine.

The eight positions are teacher, teacher aide, substitute teacher, traveling teacher, principal, assistant principal, school secretary, and school bus driver. (Bus drivers already are subject to mandatory random drug and alcohol testing under a 1991 federal law.)

Individuals who test positive don't have any opportunity to challenge the test results and are subject to discipline, including termination.

In defending its policy before the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Knox County Board of Education is arguing that suspicionless testing for educators is lawful because they hold "safety sensitive" positions.

The Association counters that "safety sensitive" applies only to certain jobs—like airline pilots, train engineers, and air traffic controllers—that involve a potentially high risk to human life. Since 1987, NEA has opposed random drug testing because it is unprofessional, degrading, unnecessary, expensive, an invasion of privacy, and unconstitutional.

A decision in the Knox County case is expected by the end of the year.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Ted Pitts

Defeat for Academic Freedom

In February 1997, *NEA Today* reported a stunning victory for academic freedom.

In a case involving NEA member Margaret Boring, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit had ruled that the doctrine of academic freedom protects the rights of high school teachers "both inside and outside the classroom."

But this year, in a serious blow to the First Amendment, the Fourth Circuit has voted to overturn the earlier decision. By a 7-6 margin, the court held that public high school teachers have no right to academic freedom.

Boring, a successful high school drama teacher in Buncombe County, North Carolina since 1979, was punished in June 1992 for selecting a controversial play for her students to perform in the state drama competition.

Boring argued that she was punished not because of legitimate pedagogical concern about the play's content, but because the board needed a scapegoat to shield it from political heat. Media reports note that "conservative Christians" had placed an ad in the local paper to complain about the play.

This year, the court held that Boring could not challenge the disciplinary action because it arose from a curricular dispute, and "the school, not the teacher, has the right to fix the curriculum." The court added that "a public high school teacher" has no "First Amendment right to participate in the makeup of the school curriculum."

The six dissenting judges wrote that the majority's "astonishing" opinion "eliminates all constitutional protection for the in-class speech of teachers" and "extinguishes First Amendment rights in an arena where the Supreme Court has directed they should be brought 'vividly into operation.'"

NEA will seek Supreme Court review. But the Court accepts only about 1 percent of all appeals, so chances it'll hear the case are slim.

Meanwhile, teachers in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina better watch what they say in the classroom. That's where the Boring decision is binding legal precedent.

—M.D.S.

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Mail your signed application to: NEA Credit Card Program; c/o MBNA America Bank, N.A.; P.O. Box 15464; Wilmington, DE 19850-5464

Heads Up!

TV Tips

Brave New World
NBC, Sunday, May 3, 9-11 p.m. ET, check local listings. This adaptation of Aldous Huxley's famous 1932 novel featuring Peter Gallagher takes a look at a futuristic society governed by technology.

The Leopard Son
Discovery, Sunday, May 10, 8-10 p.m. ET. This film—shot by acclaimed filmmaker Hugo van Lawick and narrated by Sir John Geilgud—traces a young leopard's journey to adulthood in the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, East Africa. Rated TV-G.

Miracle at Midnight
ABC, Sunday, May 17, 7-9 p.m. ET. This Wonderful World of Disney film tells the true story of a Danish family that risked everything to protect Danish Jews during World War II. For a study guide produced by KIDSNET, call the ABC Classroom Connection at 800/647-4ABC. Rated TV-G.

ABC

National Geography Bee
PBS, check local listings or contact your local PBS station. Watch for the finals of the 1998 National Geography Bee for students in grades 4-8, held in Washington, D.C.

Bug Juice
Disney Channel, Sundays, 5-5:30 p.m. ET. Students can gear up for campfires and canoes at Camp Waziyatah in Waterford, Maine, as this series takes a look at the summer camp experience. Each episode is a video journal captured by the camp's boys and girls, aged 12 to 15. Rated TV-G.

Carolyn Kaster

Attila Dory

The Wall
Showtime, May, check local listings. This film is a trilogy of fictional stories inspired by the many mementos left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. A study guide developed by KIDSNET is available at www.showtimeonline.com or www.kidsnet.org.

Robert Kennedy: A Memoir
Discovery, Sunday, June 7, 8-11 p.m. ET. Based on journalist Jack Newfield's acclaimed biography, this special features never-before-seen film footage and exclusive interviews with three of Kennedy's children.

Fire, Risk and Rhythm: Stories of Arts for Change
Bravo, Sunday, June 28, 7-8 p.m. ET. This documentary examines the impact the arts have made on the lives of three at-risk young people. Call 800/580-ARTS for details about Bravo's "Start Smart" arts in education campaign, which includes a free resource booklet.

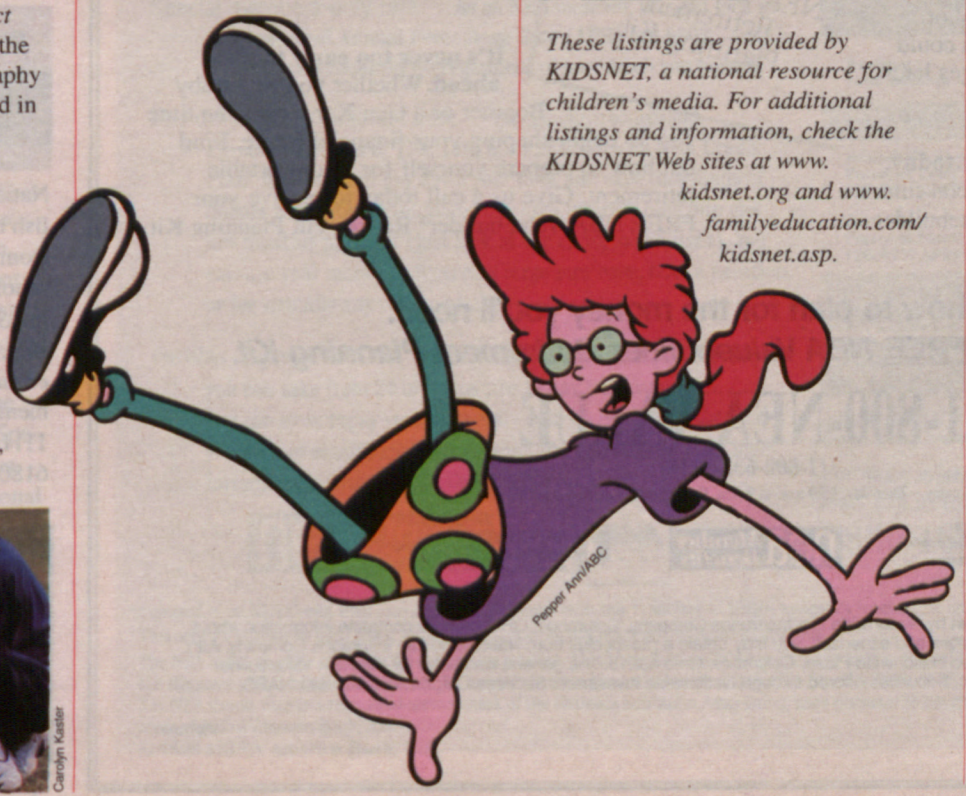
CBS News: Class of 2000
CBS, June, check local listings. This four-year initiative by CBS News and AT&T to document the lives of teens who will graduate high school in the class of 2000 continues with student discussions about life after high school. A study guide produced by KIDSNET is available at www.cbs.com or www.kidsnet.org.

Disney's Pepper Ann
ABC, Saturday mornings, check local listings for time. Each half-hour animated episode follows 12-year-old Pepper Ann Pearson's ride on the roller coaster of adolescence. Students at the Los Angeles Archer School for Girls served as consultants.

Vis a Vis: Beyond the Veil
PBS, Thursday, August 27, check local listings. Mark your calendar now for the premiere of this PBS documentary series, which features conversations between people separated by physical, political, and psychological differences. This first show records a conversation between two high school English teachers—one American (NEA member Deborah Whitley from Rockville, Maryland), the other Iranian (Sima Daad of Tehran).

PBS

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media. For additional listings and information, check the KIDSNET Web sites at www.kidsnet.org and www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp.


Pepper Ann/ABC

school stories

Had enough of simplistic media stories about life in America's public schools? Want a peek at what's really happening inside those halls and classrooms? Check out *School Stories*, jointly produced by NEA and The Learning Channel. Here's the schedule:

Single-Sex Classes
Sunday, May 10, 9 a.m. ET. Single-sex classes have stirred up controversy for years. This episode follows a group of Virginia teachers who are sending students to single-sex and mixed classes to figure out which works best.

Great School by Design
Sunday, May 17, 9 a.m. ET. Over the last five years, an elementary school in Chula Vista, California, has become the top attraction for some 8,000 educators. Why? Staffers have boosted academic achievement by addressing the needs of the diverse student body.

Building Community
Sunday, May 24, 9 a.m. ET. After eight successful years in a poor, rural community, principal Steve Scroggs moved to a "Cadillac" of a school in North Carolina. What he found was a bit surprising: Money and opportunity don't automatically build a sense of community.

Computers: Hype or Hope?
Sunday, May 31, 9 a.m. ET. Is all the effort and expense of wiring schools and classrooms to the Internet worth the effort? The Princeton, New Jersey, school district offers educators' insights and answers.

Saving City Schools
Sunday, June 7, 9 a.m. ET. Can the nation's worst schools recover? A look at how Chicago schools are turning the corner with the help of parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders.

BONUS: An added plus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after airing. For details or to order tapes, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. In addition, educators have permission to tape the shows for future educational use.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

State by State

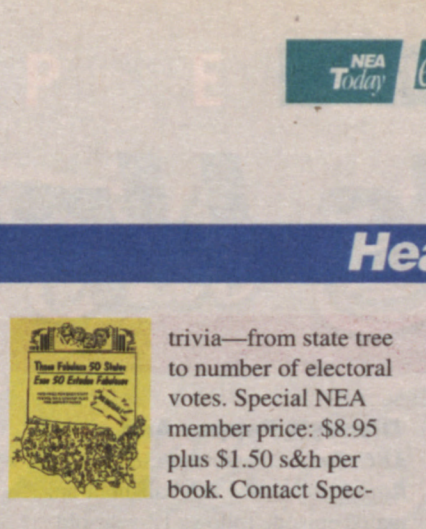
Those Fabulous 50 States/Esos 50 Estados Fabulosos is a bilingual collection of simple fact sheets on state trivia—from state tree to number of electoral votes. Special NEA member price: $8.95 plus $1.50 s&h per book. Contact Spectrum Books, P.O. Box 4365, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359, 818/707-3336.

Make a Difference

Time to get practical about school reform. *The School Change Checklist: A Basic Guide* by two California teachers offers guidelines for writing a mission statement, tips for formulating educational objectives that can bring a program to life, ideas for making change appealing to parents and students, and advice on getting the dollars you need to make change happen. Special NEA member price: $4.50 plus $2.50 s&h. Call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. Ask for stock #2155-X-00-FF.

"Retirement can be a smooth transition or a jarring change."

Financial Planning, November, 1997



Will you be ready to ease into retirement? Experts say that many Americans will not be able to maintain their current standard of living once they retire because they didn't plan ahead. Even if your savings and STRS are supplemented by Social Security you could still come up short in the long run. Which means you could be faced with some jarring changes later on in life.

Start preparing for tomorrow...today. To get a head start on your financial future call now for your Free NEA Valuebuilder Retirement Planning Kit. It explains how variable annuities work...how to determine your retirement goals...how to choose the right investment strategy for your lifestyle and age...details the six new funds now available...and much more.

It's never too early to plan ahead. Whether you're a Baby Boomer or a Gen Xer, now's the time to begin shaping your financial future. Find out how to prepare yourself for a comfortable retirement. Give us a call today to receive your FREE NEA Valuebuilder® Retirement Planning Kit.

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Understanding TV Ratings

Still having trouble understanding the age-based TV ratings symbols? The National Cable Television Association, in conjunction with nine child advocacy groups, offers *Tools to Use to Help You Choose*, a video explaining the ratings system and featuring Captain Kangaroo and Rockapella. Single copies free. Write to NCTA, 1724 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Geography Trivia

Interested in a fun and easy trivia guide to geography? *Learning About the World Through Geography* by Belinda Antonson offers a series of trivia questions for elementary and middle school students. $9.95 includes s&h (Florida residents add 7 percent sales tax). Call 800/408-8618, ext. 1520.

Censorship & Stephen King

Few popular authors generate more lively debate than horrormeister Stephen King. Now the National Council of Teachers of English has compiled a collection of essays from high school teachers, students, scholars, even King himself, in *Reading Stephen King: Issues of Censorship, Student Choice, and Popular Literature*. $19.95 ($14.95 for NCTE members) plus $2 s&h. Contact NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801-1096, 800/369-6283.

Smokeless Tobacco Warning

Major League baseball players tell teens why smokeless tobacco users are playing with their lives in *Dangerous Game: The Truth About Spit Tobacco*, a video-and-pamphlet set

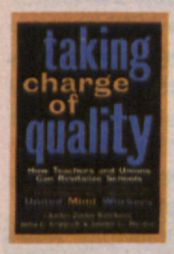
Heads Up

produced by the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute of Dental Research. First set of 25 pamphlets plus one video free. Call 800/4-CANCER.

Bone Poems
Jeff Moss, one of the creators of *Sesame Street*, has collaborated with the American Museum of Natural History to write *Bone Poems*, a whimsical collection of tributes to the dinosaurs and early mammals on display at the museum. $14.95 plus $3 s&h. Call Workman Publishing at 800/722-7202.

Racial Understanding
In *Under Our Skin: Kids Talk About Race*, six students ages 12-13 share their views on race relations in America and describe their own experiences with prejudice. $15.95 from Holiday House. Available through bookstores and distributors.

Top 10 Lists
If you and your students love top 10 lists, here's a book for you. The *Top 10 of Everything, 1998* offers a mix of hard facts and trivia on all areas of human achievement and the natural world. $17.95 plus $3.50 s&h. Contact DK Publishing, Inc., 95 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016, 888/342-5357. On the Web: www.dk.com.



Taking Charge of Quality
The ultimate discussion starter on New Unionism, *Taking Charge of Quality: How Teachers and Their Unions Can Revitalize Schools* offers a blueprint for improving teaching and learning, setting higher academic standards, and taking charge of the profession through peer review. Written by the authors of *United Mind Workers*. Special NEA member price: $6.95 plus $2.50 s&h. Call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. Ask for stock #2168-1-00-FF.

Solutions to Hunger
In *Finding Solutions to Hunger: Kids Can Make a Difference*, author Stephanie Kempf offers interactive and challenging lessons for middle and high school students on the roots and solutions to the problems of domestic and international hunger. $22 plus $7 s&h. Contact the Network of Educators on the Americas, P.O. Box 73038, Washington, DC 20056. On the Web: www.cldc.howard.edu/~neca/.

Civil Rights Poster
Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Frederick Douglass are among a dozen leaders featured in *Civil Rights Leaders*, a 24" x 36" poster. Special NEA member price: $6 plus $2.75 s&h per order. Contact Yankee Ingenuities, Ltd., P.O. Box 7305, McLean, VA 22106, 703/573-8161.

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Bank One Personal Loan (20.49% APR)	$1,818	$6,060	$9,091	$15,151
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The NEA is not involved in the credit application process. Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program. All applications are subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. The account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.
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Grants

Distance Learning
The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers telecommunications grants and loans for schools and school districts that work with rural organizations to improve telecommunications access. Deadline: June 1 for grants or combination grant and loan, August 14 for loan only. For an application, go to www.ed.gov/Technology/chalgrnt.html.

Technology
If your local Association or school district is interested in technology training for educators, you may want to check into grants from the federal government. But only "consortia" that include at least one local educational agency (LEA) with a high percentage of children living below the poverty line may apply. Deadline: May 29. For more information on the Web, go to www.ed.gov/Technology/chalgrnt.html.

Arts Education
The National Endowment for the Arts offers grants for pre-K-12 art education projects. Schools and school systems are eligible. The $5,000 to $200,000 grants must be matched at least one-to-one with non-federal funds. Deadline: September 14. For more information, contact the National Endowment for the Arts, Nancy Hanks Center, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20506. On the Web: http://arts.endow.gov.

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Announcements

NEA Call for Entries
Has your school district created a program to reduce racial and ethnic tensions? If yes, information about the program can help other NEA members—if you submit a descriptive summary for inclusion in an upcoming NEA resource guide. Send information about your program to Wil Luna, NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7578.

Travel Scholarships
The American Council for International Studies (ACIS) offers high school students two *Travel in Education* scholarships—one for artwork and one for creative writing. Two $1,000 grand prize scholarships will be awarded. Deadline: June 30. Entries must be sent to ACIS by a sponsoring teacher. For an application, call 800/888-2247 or check the Web at www.acis.com.

Voyager Learning
The Discovery Channel and Voyager Expanded Learning are inviting schools to embark on a four-week "adventure camp" centered on the theme of the human body. The after-school program, called Pre+Med,™ uses interactive resources from the Discovery Channel to examine all aspects of the human body. For more information, call 888/399-1995.

Giveaways
School districts around the country are getting a lift from corporate America through the A+ America Free Technology for Schools Program.

The Springfield, Massachusetts, district recently received $40,000 worth of free computer equipment

Heads Up

through the program, which is backed by some 14 corporate sponsors, including supermarkets, retailers, catalogs, and phone companies.

More than 20,000 schools are currently enrolled in the project. To sign up, call 800/706-5500 or go to www.aplusamerica.org.

Web Winners

Cybersavvy

Here's a site detailing online safety and appropriate use of the Web for students. Check out the Cybersavvy Web site at www.cybersavvy.org.

Bus Driver Site

NEA member Frank Hyden has created a great bus driver Web site, including a discussion forum and bus driver poetry section. Check it out at http://user.mc.net/hyden. For more on issues important to school support staff, go to www.nea.org/esp/.

Youth With Disabilities

The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities offers a comprehensive information clearinghouse on its Web site. Call it up at www.nichcy.org.

Rediscovered

One of the best-known and visited Web sites has been redesigned with several new features. Discovery Channel Online at www.discovery.com now features personalized E-mail, news headlines that when clicked bring up entire stories, and live "Animal Cams" that show pandas, orangutans, and other animals.

Science

The Edu-Links Web site has tons of easy-to-access classroom activities and Web sites for physics, chemistry, biology, and general science teachers. Take a look at www.compusmart.ab.ca/dryrot/index.html.

Cloning

Oregon high school science teacher and NEA member Keith Nuthall offers interactive lessons on cloning. Check out *Hello Dolly: A WebQuest on Cloning* on the Web at http://204.102.137.135/PUSDRBHS/science/clone/dolly.htm.

Great Sites

The American Library Association has launched Great Sites, a collection of more than 700 fun and exciting sites for children and grownups. Check it out at www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/amazing.html.

Contests

Screensaver Contest

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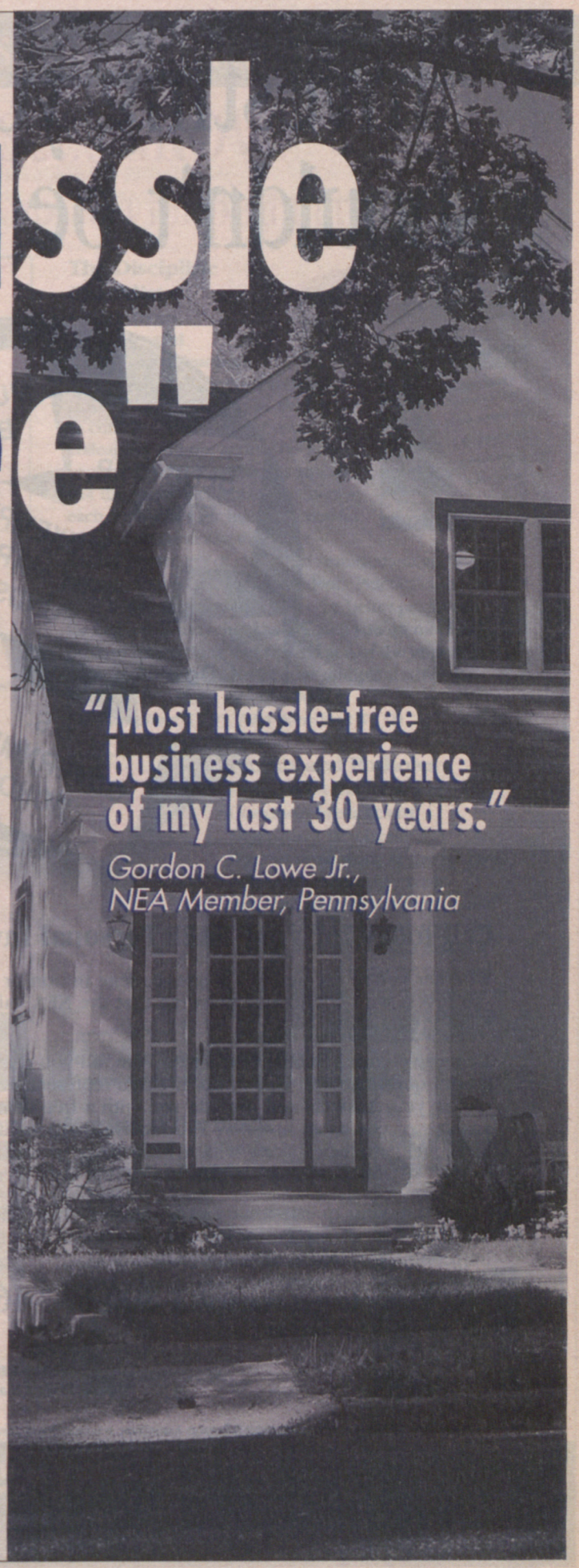

Heads Up

ing laptops, software packages, and a trip to Washington, D.C., will be awarded to students, their teachers, and schools for projects on ethics in software management.

Prizes will be awarded for software design, original artwork, and essay. Application deadline: June 12. For an entry form, call the Business Software Alliance at 888/NO-PIRACY or visit the Alliance's Web site at www.bsa.org.

Fellowships

Environmental Education

Teachers of students in grades 6-12 in the Southeast can apply for three 10-day summer programs sponsored by Jacksonville State University. Sixty educators will receive $400 stipends plus living expenses.

The summer institutes will take place June 21-July 1 in Amicalola Falls State Park, Dawsonville, Georgia; July 6-16 in Camp Weed, Live Oak, Florida; and July 20-30 at Crow's Neck Environmental Education Center, Tishomingo, Mississippi.

Graduate credit and continuing education units will be available to participants. For details, contact Margaret Bogan, Dept. of Educational Resources, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265. Send E-mail to mbogan@jsucc.jsu. edu.

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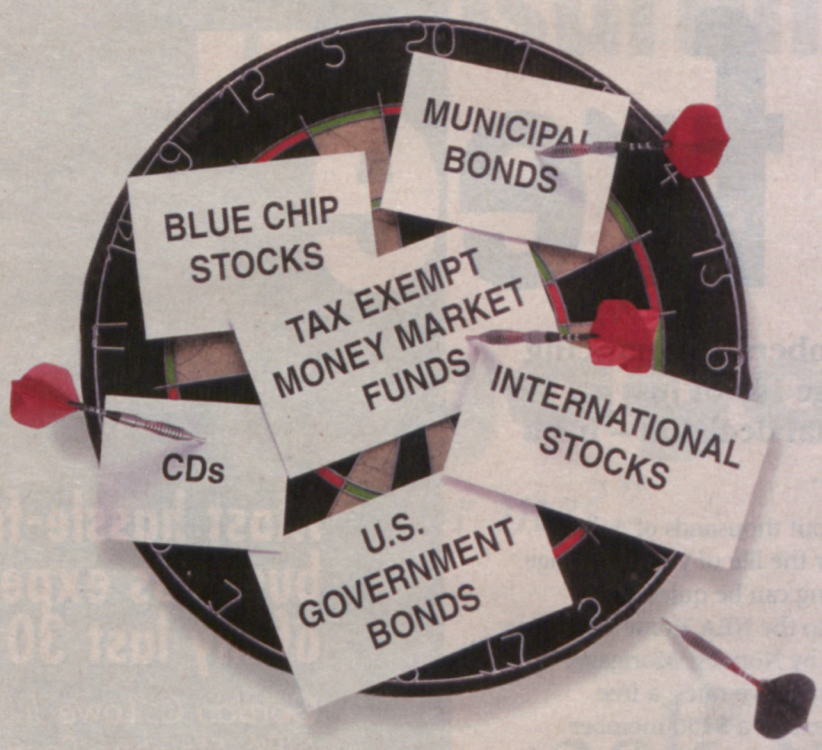

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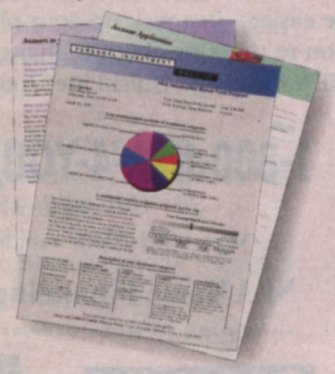

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Awards

The Walt Disney Company recently presented its eighth annual American Teacher Awards to 36 outstanding educators. Twenty NEA members were among the honorees. The June 10 tribute to the award winners will air on the Disney Channel on June 20.

The NEA member-finalists are:

- **Athletic Coach**—Mark Antonoff, Downers Grove South High School, Downers Grove, Illinois; Denise Coats, Lake Highlands High School, Dallas, Texas; and Maria Nolan, Secaucus Middle-Secondary School, Ridgefield, New Jersey.
- **Early Childhood**—Carole Moyer, Salem School, Columbus, Ohio; and Larry Statler, Santa Teresa Elementary School, San Jose, California.
- **English**—Helen Anderson Long, Kenwood Middle School, Clarksville, Tennessee.
- **Foreign Language**—Celine Robertson, Lincoln High/Park Middle School, Lincoln, Nebraska; Martha Singer Semmer, Frisco, Breckenridge & Summit Cove Elementary Schools, Frisco, Colorado; and Scott Wells, Jackie Robinson Academy, Long Beach, California.
- **General Elementary**—John Schwartz, Blair Pointe Elementary School, Peru, Indiana; and Kathleen Wiebke, Sonoran Sky Elementary School, Scottsdale, Arizona.
- **Mathematics**—Marylin Leinenbach, Chauncey Rose Middle School, Terre Haute, Indiana; and James Snider, East Middle School, Nashville, Tennessee.
- **Performing Arts**—Timothy Brophy, Grahamwood Elementary School, Memphis, Tennessee; and Jeffrey Haas, Ridgewood High School, Ridgewood, New Jersey.
- **Physical Education & Health**—Janis Mathison, Shawano Community High School, Shawano, Wisconsin;

Heads Up

Julie Campbell-Fouch, Stanford Middle School, Long Beach, California; and Joyce McClendon Fletcher, Peyton Forest Elementary, Atlanta, Georgia.

■ **Science**—Jacqueline Omland, Aberdeen Central High School, Aberdeen, South Dakota; and John Zavalney, Foshay Learning Center, Los Angeles, California.

■ **Visual Arts**—Jerry Stover, Clay County High School, Clay, West Virginia; Sara Bopp Strange, Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, Montgomery, Alabama; and Ann Ayers, Coral Springs High School, Coral Springs, Florida.

Lesson Plan Winners

Several NEA members were winners in Microsoft's Lesson Collection Contest, designed to attract great lesson plans from K-12 teachers. Microsoft takes the best plans—arranged in nine subject areas—then collects them and makes them available for free.

NEA member Tammy Payton of Loogootee Elementary West in Loogootee, Indiana, won this year's grand prize—a multimedia computer system and Microsoft software for her school.

Other NEA members also won software. They include Barbara Wood of Kent, Washington; Joe Gotchy, of Auburn, Washington; and Steve Hayes of Collinsville, Illinois.

Microsoft is now accepting lessons plans for its third annual contest. To enter, go to http://encarta.msn.com/schoolhouse/lessons/default.asp.

Corrections

Helping Children with ADD

NEA Today's March cover story, "Helping Kids to Focus," listed an incorrect phone number for ordering *101 Ways to Help Children with ADD Learn* and other Department of Education publications. The correct number for the Department of Education's Information Service is 800/USA-LEARN.

Exercise Day

May 6 is the correct date of the 10th annual ACES (All Children Exercising Simultaneously) project, started by NEA New Jersey member Len Saunders. For further information about the event, which begins at 10 a.m. local time, go to http://members.aol.com/acesday/aces.html.

Member Exchange

Cancer Project

Illinois NEA-Retired member and cancer survivor Larry Baran has teamed up with NEA Student Program member Patrick Mogge to create Project ROSE-BUDS.

Through this 45-minute project, students and teachers can make 50 "yellow roses of hope and healing" and attach them to students' postcard messages for cancer survivors.

The roses and cards will be distributed to participants at the Coming Together to Combat Cancer marches on September 26 in Washington, D.C., and around the nation. For complete set of materials, send name, school address, FAX/E-mail to JTPA-ROSE-BUDS, Homewood-Flossmoor High School, 999 Kedzie Ave., Flossmoor, IL 60422. Send E-mail to projectrose-buds@hotmail.com.

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56 pp., 1997, Stock #2153-3-00-D, Non-members $5.95, NEA Members $4.50

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Advice from 60 Successful Elementary Teachers

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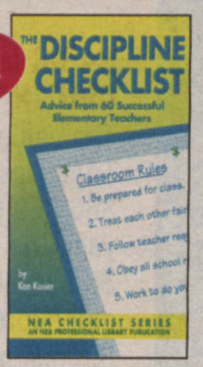

Got a student discipline problem? How would you like to be able to consult with dozens of your colleagues without getting up from your desk? This checklist lets you do just that! Sixty elementary teachers—each recognized for highly successful efforts at maintaining discipline—share their secrets of classroom management and suggestions for motivating today's students. Practical and easy-to read, this checklist will help you be better prepared for beginning the school year; coach you on modeling positive interactions; and remind you of the importance of maintaining flexibility in your discipline strategies.
56 pp., 1998, Stock #2152-5-00-D, Non-members $5.95, NEA Members $4.50

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Filled with over 1,000 classroom tested tips, this essential checklist is the perfect welcoming gift for newly hired teachers. This book covers everything from getting acquainted with other school staff to designing an inviting classroom and developing lesson plans. With all the important preparations for Day One and the rest of the year organized into an easy-to-use checklist, beginning teachers will find this to be an invaluable resource.
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NEA Members Insurance Trust Plan
1996 Summary Annual Report

(Trust Plan Year Beginning September 1, 1996)

The following is the summary annual report for the NEA Members Insurance Plan, Employer Identification Number 52-1126682, including information for NEA Life Insurance Program, NEA Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance Program, DUES-TAB, and NEA MemberCare Medicare Supplement Program for period beginning September 1, 1996, and ending August 31, 1997. The annual report has been filed with the Internal Revenue Service, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

BASIC NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The value of Trust assets, after subtracting liabilities of the Trust was $93,384,886 as of August 31, 1997, compared to $86,860,600 as of September 1, 1996. During the Trust year, the Trust experienced an increase in its net assets of $6,524,286. This increase includes unrealized appreciation and depreciation in the value of Trust assets; that is, the difference between the value of the Trust assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the Trust year, the Trust had total income of $64,616,239 including participant contributions of $47,310,677, realized gains of $10,316,894 from the sale of assets, and earnings from investments of $5,975,545.

Trust expenses were $58,091,953. These expenses included benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries, administrative and other expenses.

INFORMATION FOR NEA LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all Life Insurance claims incurred under the terms of this program. The total contributions for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 1996, and ending August 31, 1997, were $32,794,534.

Because it is a so called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 1997, the contributions made under such "experienced-rated" contract were $32,794,534 and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was $27,020,658.

INFORMATION FOR NEA ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT (AD&D) PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all AD&D claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. The total contributions for the Trust year beginning September 1, 1996, and ending August 31, 1997 were $1,780,696.

Because it is a so called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 1997, the contributions made under such "experienced-rated" contract were $1,780,696 and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was $1,510,523.

INFORMATION FOR DUES-TAB PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all DUES-TAB claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. The total contributions for the Trust year beginning September 1, 1996 and ending August 31, 1997 were $2,246,271.

Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 1997, the contributions made were $2,246,271 and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was $1,926,866. Benefits charged, less benefit claims paid, were ($4,236) which is comprised of incurred but unreported claims and a pooled claim charge. Trust expenses, less benefit claims paid, were $46,341 in premium taxes and $141,520 in other expenses.

The DUES-TAB program is self-supporting and paid by premiums from the NEA Members Insurance Trust funds rather than from Member contributions.

INFORMATION FOR NEA MEMBERCARE MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

This information will be distributed directly to Medicare Supplement Program participants.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As a participant, you have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof for a reasonable charge or you may inspect the Annual Report without charge at the office of NEA Members Insurance Trust, c/o NEA Member Benefits, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 or at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. You also have the right to receive from the Trust Administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the Trust and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the Trust and accompanying notes, or both. The Administrator will state the charge, if any, of the specific document you request so you can find out the cost before ordering.

In the Light Lane

May Flowers, June Bugs

After missing two days of school due to snow, I explained to my first grade class, "We will have a make-up day on Monday."

One little girl replied, "I can't come. My mom doesn't allow me to wear make-up."

Glenda Wilson
Ringgold, Georgia

Some children have a difficult time arriving at school by 8 a.m.

One day, a child arrived at 8:15 looking a little thrown together. I asked him if he had overslept.

Puzzled, he answered, "I was taking a bath. I guess I over*bathed*."

Cyndy Nichols
West Salem, Wisconsin

On our first school spirit day in our newly renovated building, I brought in a stuffed owl to represent our mascot, the Maple Lane Owl.

When I asked my second graders what owls had to do with Maple Lane, one student explained very seriously, "We go to Maple Lane *Owlementary* School."

Maggie Alexander
Claymont, Delaware

In one of my first grade music classes, Cindy raised her hand and said, "Mrs. Hladio, when I grow up, I'm going to be a music teacher!"

Not to be outdone by her friend, Julia promptly raised her hand and announced, "Mrs. Hladio, when I grow up, I'm going to change my name to Mrs. Hladio!"

Lisa Hladio
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

As April was drawing to a close and May was beginning, I asked my first graders the popular question, "If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers (Mayflower) bring?"

I fully expected them to say, "The Pilgrims."

What a surprise to get this response: "May flowers bring June bugs."

Shannon Spears
Largo, Florida

At a parent-teacher conference, little David's mother expressed concern about her third grader's vivid imagination. I tried to assure her that this would subside with maturity.

She went on to state how David loves to whip out pictures from his wallet, showing his imaginary friend, "Sparky." He shows them to anyone, anywhere, anytime, she lamented.

I asked, "Does he have any pictures?"

"Honey," she said, "he doesn't even have a wallet!"

Lucille Wentworth
Newmanstown, Pennsylvania

After my sixth-grade social studies class had completed a brief study of the Persian Empire, I asked students to describe an accomplishment of Emperor Cyrus the Great.

One student wrote, "Cyrus the Great is known for conquering the Baby Lions near the Tiger River."

I'm sure she meant the *Babylonians* near the *Tigris* River.

Mary Pat Bogeman
Indianapolis, Indiana

During my high school's cabaret spaghetti dinner, a father, who looked to be in his early 30s, wandered into my technology lab with two little boys in tow. He picked a tool off the tool panel and, reminiscing, said, "Boy, it's been a long time since I was in here!"

Remembering the safety glasses requirement that must have been drilled into his head by my predecessor, he turned to his kids and said, "Uh-oh, what should I do before starting any project?"

The kids thought and thought. I caught their eyes and glanced at the open safety glasses cabinet, hoping they would get the hint.

Suddenly, one boy, who must have watched his father work at home, lit up and said, "First you get a beer!"

Douglas Cropper
Philmont, New York

"They've got this great software, they call them paperbacks."

For my 50th birthday, my son gave me a t-shirt that says "Fifty Rules!"

I had worn the shirt many times over the years, and students had teased me about being really old. But one ninth grade boy in my P.E. class read it another way.

"Mrs. Beach," he said, "you always have too many rules!"

Rinda Beach
Phelan, California

As my fifth grade social studies students got caught up in the events leading to the Revolutionary War, I was delighted to see a student who rarely participated in class start to tune in to the discussion.

When he heard me speak of the "shot heard round the world," his hand went up like a flash.

He blurted out, "Geez, Mrs. Wilson, what kind of ammo did they use back then?"

Gloria Wilson
Washington Township, Michigan

On a recent visit to my fourth grade class, the county 4-H representative asked the students to name what the four *H*s signified.

The students quickly answered Head, Hands, and Heart, but they couldn't remember the fourth *H*.

Trying to elicit "Health," the representative hinted that the last *H* stood for something that was at times associated with the human body.

Quickly a hand shot up in the back of the room. The rep called on a smiling young man, who stood and proudly answered "Hemorrhoid!"

From that day on, the rep always tells each class what the 4 *H*s represent.

Michael Bass
Greenville, Alabama

Presidential Laughs

My sixth grade students had the word "controversial" on their spelling list.

In her spelling sentences, one student wrote, "The issue of President Clinton going to a fair with Monica Lewinsky is very controversial."

Jennifer Gleason
Wood River Junction, Rhode Island

For an election unit, I created a trivia worksheet for my fourth graders.

One question asked, "How many siblings does Bill Clinton have?"

As I looked around the room, I could see three boys hard at work together, answering the question.

They clapped their hands two times and said, "Clin—ton... yep...two siblings."

Ginny Gelbach
Denver, Colorado

As my second graders were getting ready to vote for two representatives to the student council, I explained that they would be voting by secret ballot, just like their parents do when they vote for President.

As I tallied the votes, I found one student had voted for Lincoln and Washington.

Sara Holt
La Junta, Colorado

My kindergartners were just beginning to learn about money. One of their first activities was sorting coins.

"I lost one of my coins!" Sara said.

"Which one?" I asked.

"The ponytail guy with the bow in his hair," she said.

Karen Kaberle
Louisville, Kentucky

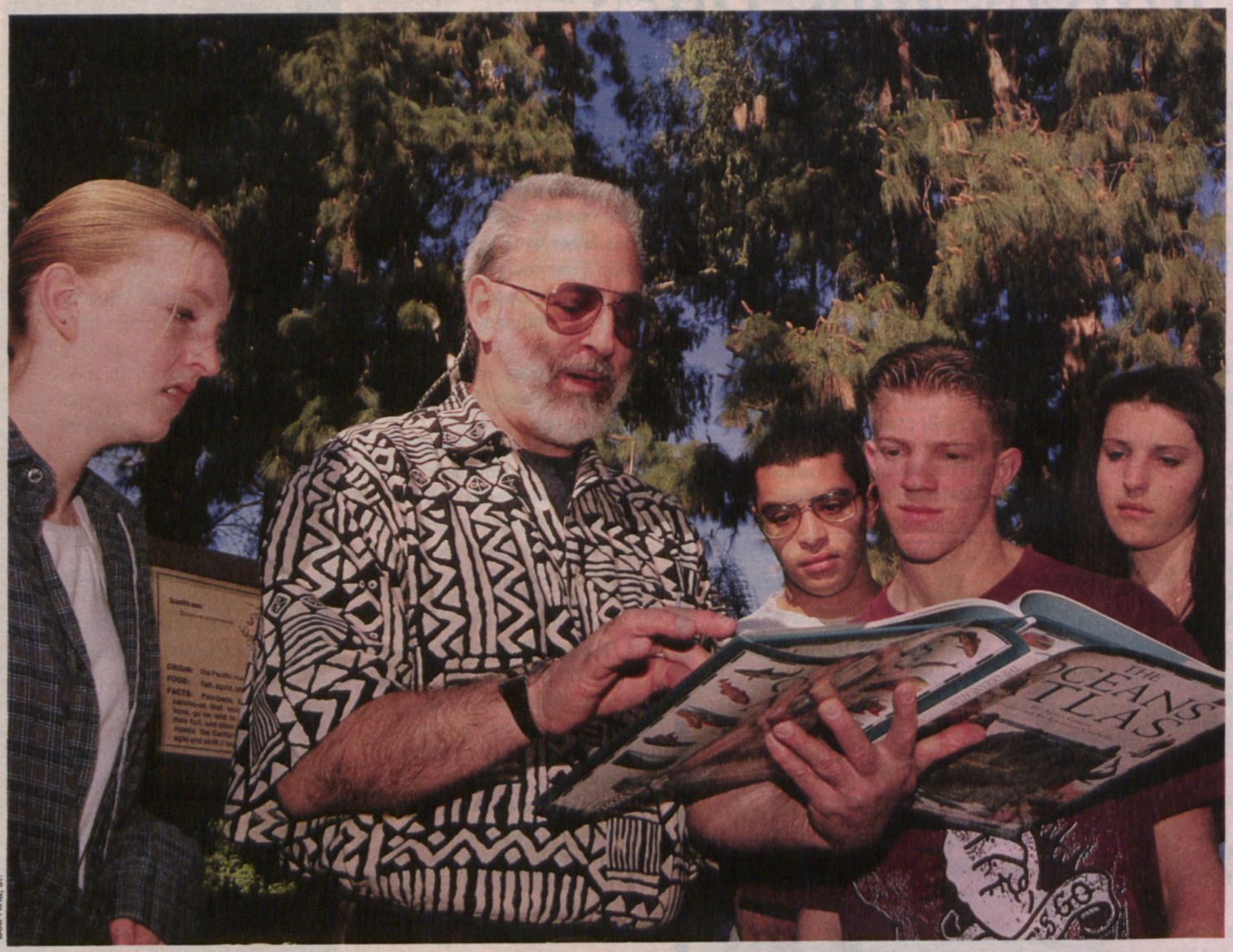
Got Laughs?

■ Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7206, E-mail NEAToday@nea.org.

■ Or you can post your contribution—and read more stories—on *NEA Today*'s Web site. Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and click on "In the Light Lane."

People

Taking a **Closer Look**



Bob Riha, Jr.

As he has done every summer for more than 20 years, California science teacher **Barry Shapiro** will load up an RV with a dozen high schoolers this June and head out for a week-long camping trip to study the ecosystems of Monterey and Santa Cruz.

The trip is part of the Institute of Inshore Marine Biology, a summer school founded and run by Shapiro, who teaches at North Hollywood High School's magnet center at the Los Angeles Zoo.

With tidal pools, mud flats, and ocean beaches as their summer classrooms, Shapiro's students will rise at 5 a.m. to take water samples, conduct population studies of elephant seals, and classify plant and animal life.

The emphasis is on mastering the techniques and tools of real-life field research. But the biggest skill students learn is observation.

"Kids see but they don't look," notes Shapiro. "Getting down on your hands and knees and seeing what a creature really looks like—that's a hard skill to learn."

At week's end, Shapiro and gang will return to Los Angeles, where they'll spend four weeks analyzing their data. For preparing a 200-page final report, each student will earn a year's worth of science credits.

"Previous participants say that even though it was a lot of work, they had a lot of fun," says Shapiro, who volunteers his time and charges just enough to cover expenses. "They talk about it for years."

Teacher of the Year Finalists

Cynthia Menzel (KNEA)

Modeling **Job**

Nurturing future educators is Kansas middle school teacher **Darla Mallein**'s way of giving something back to the profession she loves.

A history teacher at Emporia Middle School, Mallein also coordinates seminars at Emporia State University to walk student teachers through the nuts and bolts of their new careers.

Six times a semester, Mallein brings the students together with veteran teachers, principals, and parents to discuss topics such as classroom discipline, interviewing skills, or how to conduct a parent-teacher conference.

"We teachers have a responsibility to ensure that every classroom has a well-qualified teacher," Mallein says. "We need to nurture those beginning teachers, we need to support them, we need to be their role models.

"I want to do my part to strengthen the profession," she continues. "Plus, it's rewarding for me. I think I learn as much from my student teachers as they learn from me."

Mallein is also a frequent guest speaker in ESU education classes.

"I go in and tell them just how much I love teaching," she says.

Back at Emporia Middle School, Mallein tries to rustle up new recruits to the profession through her Future Educators Club.

The 17 club members meet once a month to plan American Education Week celebrations and other activities, and Mallein arranges for the students to help elementary teachers after school with tutoring or classroom bulletin boards.

"You need that real-life experience, whether you're an eighth grader or a senior in college," she explains.

Charles Slate

STOP and **Go**

When he drove a school bus, **Earl Brooks** not only took students home, he also kept them in school.

In 1993, Brooks, then a part-time bus driver at Conway Primary School in South Carolina, created STOP—the Student Time Out Program—as an alternative to out-of-school suspension.

"A lot of the children need help, and we have to spend time with them," Brooks explains. "These days a lot of them don't have father figures because they come from single-parent homes."

Thanks to STOP, kids spend their suspension in the school, completing homework assignments and getting help with their toughest subjects.

Brooks also founded the 100 Plus Club for STOP students. For good grades on math and spelling tests, Brooks rewarded kids with small treats like pens and pencils—which he paid for out of his own pocket.

"When I was in school I did everything to get out of math," Brooks notes. "It was my worst subject—but I know now that everything you do has to do with math."

Brooks has since moved on to nearby Pee Dee Elementary School to take a full-time job as a custodian supervisor. But wherever he is, children flock to him.

"When I see one of the students coming down the hallway saying, 'Mr. Brooks, I made 100 percent!' that makes my day," he says.

Surfing **Seniors**

Michigan teacher **Kim Mitchell**'s senior class loves learning to surf the Internet—but these seniors are more interested in finding retirement information than the hottest rock or rap group's Web site.

During school breaks and summer vacation, when Rochester High School's computer lab would otherwise be sitting idle, Mitchell invites elderly folks from a local senior center to come in and learn Internet basics.

"I really believe that one generation should give back to another," she explains. "This is my way of giving back."

Mitchell, an English and language arts teacher, shows her classes of 15 to 20 seniors how to use search engines and URLs—and gives them tips for mastering a mouse with arthritic fingers or viewing a computer screen through trifocals.

"They're good at it. It's amazing what they can learn," she says of her students, many of whom are in their 80s or even 90s.

"They're so excited. I hope I'm still as engaged when I'm an elderly person," she continues. "They've taught me that we can all be students our whole lives if we want to."

The students take their new skills back to the senior center's computer lab, where they browse the Internet or send E-mail to far-flung relatives.

In a refreshing role reversal, one of Mitchell's students even taught his grandchildren how to use the Internet.

"He told me he went from being this old guy to being a cool grandad," she says proudly.

Mitchell's volunteering helped her school last year during a bond vote. The bond had failed the year before, but this time, after a few of Mitchell's classes, seniors rallied their support.

The bond passed, bringing money for school renovations—including an upgraded computer lab.

Joe Slavek

Steve Pope

Dramatic **Changes**

When race riots rocked East High School a couple years ago, Iowa drama teacher **Ruth Ann Gaines** used the power of theater to diffuse the tension.

Gaines created a drama group called Voices of Change, a multicultural mix of students who write and perform skits on diversity.

In her regular drama classes, Gaines focuses on plays about contemporary social and psychological issues—the kinds of problems her students face every day.

"It's harder for students to learn if they don't see themselves in the curriculum," she explains.

By working out their feelings behind the actor's mask, her students have learned to be problem solvers, decision makers, and team members.

Today, East boasts the largest high school drama enrollment in Des Moines, and students who struggle in other courses thrive under Gaines's direction.

Gaines praises her students for helping to create an atmosphere of tolerance at the school.

"When I see young people not only master drama skills, but grow and mature as human beings, I know that I have fulfilled my role as a teacher," she says.

These two NEA members are among four finalists for the 1998 National Teacher of the Year. This award is presented annually by the Council of Chief State School Officers and Scholastic *magazine.*

Money

Coming to Terms

The insurance industry often uses jargon that makes the rest of us feel left out. When shopping for life insurance, here's some lingo you should know:

- **Term insurance** is straight insurance protection. A term policy provides a specific death benefit for a specified number of years. For example, you could buy a one-year term policy with a death benefit of $100,000.
- **Whole life insurance,** also called **permanent insurance** or **cash value insurance,** covers you for your entire life. Part of your premium pays for the death benefit, and part goes into a tax-deferred investment fund. Your premiums are leveled out over your lifetime so that you pay a constant amount, more than is needed for pure death protection in the early years, less later.
- **Universal life** is a type of cash value policy that strips out the cost of the death benefit, the value of the investment account, and the administrative expenses. These flexible policies allow you to increase or decrease the premium or to skip it altogether. You also can add to your cash value or increase your death benefit.
- **Variable life** is a permanent insurance policy that lets you invest and control the cash value portion in a separate account. You can put the investment portion of your policy into a variety of mutual funds.

  With variable life, you have more investment risk—but also the opportunity for bigger returns than those guaranteed by whole life policies.
- **Universal variable** combines flexibility of payment with investment choice. You have the flexibility in premiums that is typical of universal, as well as the wide range of investment options typical of variable life.
- **Vanishing premium** policies produce dividends large enough to eventually cover annual premiums. Vanishing premium policies may be whole life, universal, or variable. They are typically paid off in 10 years, after which the policy becomes self-sustaining.

  Many vanishing premium policies were sold in the late 1980s, but recent low interest rates probably mean that the policies will take more than 10 years to become self-sustaining.

Decisions, Decisions

Lessons in Life Insurance

With rates for term insurance dropping, now's a great time to review your policy.

If you spend just 15 minutes reviewing your life insurance this year, that will be 15 minutes more than the average American.

Let's face it, life insurance is boring. And it can be costly, too. It's much more fun to think about spending $500 on a vacation or a new rug or piece of furniture than on a life insurance policy.

If you're like most Americans, however, you probably have a nagging thought every now and then about whether your family would be okay if something happened to you.

So take a moment to think about how much insurance you need and how to get the most economical policy. Now's a good time to investigate—rates for straight term insurance have been heading down, down, down over the last several years. You may find that you can buy a new policy worth more than your current insurance—for the same price.

Think first about who depends on your salary. If you're single and have no dependents, you don't need life insurance.

If you're married and have children, a rule of thumb is that you should have life insurance equal to five to seven times your annual salary.

But financial planners suggest that you do a more detailed analysis of your situation to determine the proper amount of coverage.

The most economical way to cover your insurance needs is to buy straight term coverage, or insurance that provides a death benefit for a specific period. Term is certainly the best buy for young families, since premiums are very affordable in the early years of the policy. But premiums will increase every year as you age.

You should revisit your insurance needs every two to three years or when you go through a major life event—marriage, the birth of a child, a child's graduation from college, or retirement.

As your investment assets grow—including college savings for your children—you should be able to reduce the amount of term insurance coverage you need.

—Mary Rowland

Worksheet

How Much Life Insurance Do You Need?

Glenn Daily, an insurance consultant and author of *The Individual Investor's Guide to Low-Load Insurance Products*, recommends the following worksheet. To simplify the calculations, Daily assumes that the after-tax rate of return on the insurance proceeds will equal the inflation rate.

To get the present value of future needs and available funds, multiply the number of years of expenses by the annual expense in today's dollars. For example, if the living expenses for your family today are $20,000 a year and your youngest child will be living at home for 10 more years, multiply that $20,000 by 10 to get $200,000 and so forth. Other expenses, like children's college, can be estimated as a lump sum.

Capital Needed to Accomplish After-death Objectives

	Today's $$	No. of Years	Total
Living expenses for survivors			
While children are at home			
After children leave home			
College expenses			
Mortgage payoff			
Miscellaneous needs			
Final and probate expenses			
Children's inheritance			
Other			
Total Capital Needed			

Capital Available to Accomplish After-death Objectives

Current Investments			
Social Security			
While children are at home			
After children leave home			
Spousal earned income			
Other			
Total Capital Available			
Shortfall/(Excess)			
Adjustments			
Life Insurance Needed			

Correction

The monthly payment figures listed in April's mortgage worksheet were incorrect. The correct figures are:

Loan amount	Monthly payments on a loan that is 30 years @ 7%	15 years @ 7%
$100,000	$ 665	$ 899
$120,000	$ 798	$1,079
$130,000	$ 865	$1,168
$140,000	$ 931	$1,258
$150,000	$ 998	$1,348
$160,000	$1,064	$1,438
$170,000	$1,131	$1,528
$180,000	$1,198	$1,618
$190,000	$1,264	$1,708
$200,000	$1,331	$1,798

Eye on Retirement

Where There's a Will . . .

Gary Brown, 51, president of the Olympia Education Association and the Washington Education Association-Chinook, is like most people when it comes to estate planning.

"I've done a few things, but not as much as I should," he says.

Brown and his wife, who live in Olympia and are the parents of two grown sons, have had a will for many years.

"We had it drawn up when the kids were small because we wanted to arrange for guardianship," he says. "Over the years, we've reviewed it from time to time to make sure it still reflects our wishes."

As for other estate planning documents, Brown admits that he recently had a power of attorney prepared for his mother, but hasn't yet done one for himself.

"I'm encouraging my kids to start considering these things a lot sooner than their father did," he says.

No one relishes the thought of estate planning. But taking the time to plan now can save your loved ones a great deal of money, pain, and confusion later on.

The basic elements of an estate plan include the following documents:

■ *A will.* One of the most common personal financial mistakes people make is failing to prepare a will. If you don't have one, ask an attorney to draw one up that specifies how you want your assets distributed, names a guardian for your minor children, and appoints an executor to pay off your debts and disburse your assets.

If you already have a will, review it periodically and update it when your personal circumstances change—if you marry, divorce, have kids, or if your net worth changes.

The price of procrastination can be high. If you die without a will, the state will decide how to allocate your assets. What's worse, if you and your spouse die at the same time, the courts will decide who will raise your children.

■ *A durable power of attorney.* This document gives another person legal authority to handle your financial affairs. A durable power of attorney stays valid even if you become incapacitated.

■ *A living will and durable power of attorney for health care.* A living will, known in some states as a health care directive, outlines your wishes about what medical treatment should be withheld or provided should you become unable to communicate those wishes yourself.

A durable power of attorney for health care, also called a health care proxy, gives another person authority to make medical decisions for you if you're unable to make them.

If there's no one you can ask to serve as your health care proxy, it's still important to prepare a living will. That way, your doctors will be obligated to give you the treatment you want.

Finally, get help from professionals—attorneys, financial advisers, accountants, trust officers—to design and implement an estate plan that meets your needs.

Carl Cook

NEA member Gary Brown, left, and his wife, Pam, have revised their wills over the years as their kids, including son Greg, have grown.

Financial Finds

401(k) Guide
A Commonsense Guide to Your 401(k) gives you step-by-step instruction on how to get the most out of your 401(k). Written by *NEA Today* contributor Mary Rowland, this primer from Bloomberg Press explains how even novice investors can use the 401(k) as the basis for a lifetime of prudent financial planning. $19.95. To order, call 800/233-4830.

Women & Social Security
Social Security: What Every Woman Should Know, available free from the Social Security Administration, tells you how Social Security works, whether you're employed, self-employed, retired, or have never been employed. For a copy, call 800/772-1213.

Home Buying Tips
If you're planning to buy a home, pick up a copy of *Not One Dollar More! How to Save $3,000 to $30,000 Buying Your Next Home* by Joseph Eamon Cummins. $19.95 from Kells Media Group. To order, call 800/875-1995.

Among other tips, you'll learn how to save money by using a buyer's broker rather than a traditional real estate agent.

Bank Cost Cutter
For ideas on how to reduce bank costs, pick up a copy of *Your Bank Is Ripping You Off* by Edward Mrkvicka, Jr. $12.50 from St. Martin's Press.

Retirement Planning
Three Web sites offer online calculators and other advice for figuring out your retirement needs.

■ FinanCenter, at www.financenter.com, takes a sophisticated approach to figuring out your retirement living expenses.

■ Quicken Financial Network, at www.qfn.com, can help you calculate how much you must invest to retire in style.

■ Vanguard's retirement planner, at www.vanguard.com, is one of the only sites that helps you choose the most tax-efficient way to pull money out of your portfolio after you leave work.

Keep in mind that calculators are great for crunching numbers, but not so great at providing the judgment and insight you get from a good financial planner.

Educated Investor

I'm always reading about the wisdom of buying index funds. What, exactly, is an index fund?

An index fund is a mutual fund that tracks the performance of one of many broad market indices by investing in only those securities that compose the index—for example, the Standard and Poors (S&P) 500.

This index, like many other indices, tracks equity market activity by reporting on the cumulative performance of a group of publicly traded securities.

A significant advantage of index funds is that their expense ratios are normally much lower than what regular mutual funds charge.

That's because index fund managers do not make decisions about which securities to invest in—they only oversee the mix of securities to ensure that an index fund portfolio always matches all of the securities tracked in the specific index.

The first index fund available to individual investors was the Vanguard 500, which follows the performance of the S&P 500. The popularity of this fund prompted Vanguard to add other index funds over the years.

Other mutual fund management companies have followed Vanguard's lead, and today you can buy index funds that invest in the total market, in a small-company index, in bonds, and in different overseas markets.

The advantage of good index funds is that they match the market at low costs. They can be attractive components of any individual investment portfolio.

—NEA Member Benefits

The 1998 NEA Representative Assembly

Delegates elected to this year's RA in New Orleans, July 3-6, have several pieces of important business to decide, including whether the American Federation of Teachers and NEA should unite to create a single, new organization. Before the delegates will be Principles of Unity that, if enacted, would begin the unification of NEA and the AFT. Delegates will also vote on proposed Amendments to the NEA Standing Rules, Constitution, and Bylaws, and elect two members of the Association's nine-member Executive Committee, as well as at-large members to the NEA Board of Directors. A list of current Board members appears on page 44.

Proposed Amendments to the NEA Standing Rules, Constitution, and Bylaws

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 1

TITLE: To require that two speakers are heard for and two speakers against every issue considered by the Representative Assembly before it is in order to move the previous question.

Rule 6. Order of Business and Debate
G. A motion from the floor of the Assembly to move the previous question shall only be in order when the Assembly has heard two (2) speakers for and two (2) speakers against an issue. A motion to move the previous question shall apply to no more than the single question immediately before the Representative Assembly.

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.b (by majority vote of a state delegation). Contact Person: Susan Stitham, Alaska

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 2

TITLE: To require a hand count of ballots in all elections in which the margin of vote difference is less than one percent (1%) of the total cast.

Rule 10. Elections, Committee and Procedure
H. Elections
10. The chairperson of the Elections Committee shall present the report of each balloting by vote tally to the Representative Assembly. In the event that a secret ballot election is decided by a margin of less than one percent (1%) of the ballots cast, the Elections Committee chairperson will order that the ballots be hand counted. Notice of the recount shall be given by the chairperson of the Elections Committee from the platform as part of the Elections Committee report. In the event that each of two or more incompatible amendments receives the required number of votes, the amendment receiving the greatest number of votes shall prevail.

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.b (by majority vote of a state delegation). Contact Person: Michael Billirakis, Ohio

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 3

TITLE: To require a hand count of ballots in candidate elections in which the margin of vote difference is less than one percent (1%) of the total cast.

Rule 10. Elections, Committee and Procedure
H. Elections
10. The chairperson of the Elections Committee shall present the report of each balloting by vote tally to the Representative Assembly. Should the difference between candidate vote count be less than one percent (1%) of total vote count, an automatic hand tabulated recount shall occur in all elections for Executive Officers, Executive Committee and at-large representation to the Board of Directors. This shall be done before the report of the Elections Committee is made to the Representative Assembly. In the event that each of two or more incompatible amendments receives the required number of votes, the amendment receiving the greatest number of votes shall prevail.

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.a (by petition of at least 25 delegates). Contact Person: Mark Howard Schulze, Nebraska

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 4

TITLE: To require that requests for election recounts occur within one hour of the report of the Elections Committee to the Representative Assembly.

Rule 10. Elections, Committee and Procedure
H. Elections

(New)**14.** Delegates requesting a ballot recount must do so within one (1) hour of the report of the Elections Committee to the Representative Assembly.

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.a (by petition of at least 25 delegates). Contact Person: Dennis A. Michalski, Arizona

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT 1

TITLE: To ensure that the percentage of classroom teachers on all committees except the Advisory Committee of Student Members is the same as the percentage of classroom teachers in the Association.

Article III. Representative Assembly
Section 6. Committees
All appointive bodies of the Association except the Review Board shall be designated by the term *committee.* A Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules shall be established by the Representative Assembly. All other committees shall be established or discontinued as provided in the Bylaws. All committees except the Advisory Committee of Student Members shall comprise [at least seventy-five (75) percent classroom teachers.] the same percentage of classroom teachers as the percentage of classroom teachers in the membership of the Association. There shall be a minimum of twenty (20) percent ethnic-minority representation on each committee.

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.a (by petition of at least 50 delegates). Contact Person: Michael Bond, Maryland

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT 2

TITLE: To allow a state affiliate to eliminate, at its option, the current cap on the number of administrators/supervisors elected by states as directors to the NEA Board of Directors.

Article V. Board of Directors
Section 1. Composition
a. At least one (1) director elected within each state shall be a nonsupervisor, and if a state is entitled to more than one (1) director, at least one (1) shall be a classroom teacher. [The total number of additional directors representing the members in each state affiliate after the first shall be on the basis of proportional representation by educational position of NEA members.] A state affiliate, at its option, may provide that the total number of additional directors representing the members in that state affiliate after the first include representation by educational position of NEA members.
(no changes to **b.** and **c.**)

d. Administrators shall be represented on the Board at least in proportion to their membership in the Association. If the percentage of administrators elected to the Board of Directors fails to achieve proportional representation, the Representative Assembly shall elect at large the number required to assure such representation. Candidates for these positions shall be nominated by the delegates at the Representative Assembly who are administrators.

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.a (by petition of at least 50 delegates). Contact Person: Cheryl Sarvis, Georgia

BYLAW AMENDMENT 3

TITLE: To allow state and local affiliates the option to eliminate requirements in all-inclusive states and locals for proportional representation by educational position for delegations to the Representative Assembly and on state and local governance bodies.

Bylaw 3. Representative Assembly
3-1. Allocation of Delegates
a. Allocation of delegate credentials to state and local affiliates shall be on the basis of Active membership in the Association as of January 15 of the calendar year in which the Representative Assembly convenes.

[Representation from state and local affiliates which provide all-inclusive membership shall be on the basis of proportional representation by educational position.] State and local affiliates which provide all-inclusive membership, at their option, may provide that their delegations to the Representative Assembly include representation by educational position. Representation from state and local affiliates which include in their membership more than one (1) of the three (3) job categories eligible for Association Active membership (i.e., nonsupervisory Active members in prekindergarten through secondary instructional positions, educational support positions, or higher education faculty positions) may, at the option of the state and local affiliates, be on the basis of proportional representation by job category. A delegate elected to represent an affiliate shall be a member of that affiliate, provided that if additional delegate positions are allocated to a state affiliate on the basis of Active members of the Association within a state who are not also members of the state affiliate, only the latter members of the Association may be elected to such additional delegate positions.

Bylaw 8. Affiliates and Special Interest Groups
8-7. Standards for Local Affiliates
a. Each affiliate shall apply the one-person-one-vote principle for representation on its governing bodies except that (i) the affiliate shall take such steps as are legally permissible to achieve ethnic-minority representation at least proportionate to its ethnic-minority membership and (ii) the affiliate may adopt a provision in its governing documents that would permit that local to allocate a minimum of one (1) representative or delegate to members at each work site of a school district or higher educational institution within the jurisdiction of the affiliate.

Where an all-inclusive affiliate exists, [it shall provide proportionate representation between its nonsupervisor members and its supervisor members.] such affiliate, at its option, may provide that its governing bodies include representation by educational position.

8-11. Standards for State Affiliates
The Association shall not affiliate a state association unless it meets the following minimum standards:

a. Each affiliate shall apply the one-person, one-vote principle for representation on its governing bodies except that the affiliate shall take such steps as are legally permissible to achieve ethnic-minority representation at least proportionate to its ethnic-minority membership.

A state delegate body may adopt a provision to the governing documents of the state affiliate that would permit that state to allocate a minimum of one delegate credential to each local affiliate.

Where an all-inclusive affiliate exists, [it shall provide proportionate representation between its nonsupervisor members and its supervisor members.] such affiliate, at its option, may provide that its governing bodies include representation by educational position.

The state affiliate shall designate at least one of its NEA state directors to serve on the Board of Directors (or equivalent governing body) of the state affiliate with full rights of participation.

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.a (by petition of at least 50 delegates). Contact Person: Cheryl Sarvis, Georgia

BYLAW AMENDMENT 4

TITLE: To designate as *Seat 1* and *Seat 2* the two (2) vacancies on the NEA Executive Committee filled through election at the Representative Assembly each year and to require that candidates specify the seat for which they are running.

Bylaw 6. Executive Committee
6-1. Election
a. The Executive Committee shall consist of nine (9) members: President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, and six (6) members elected at-large by the Representative Assembly. Two (2) of the six (6) at-large members shall be elected each year. The two (2) at-large positions each year shall be designated as *Seat 1* and *Seat 2.* Prospective candidates shall certify to the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules whether they are running for *Seat 1* or *Seat 2.*

Submitted in accordance with Standing Rule 9.D.1.a (by petition of at least 50 delegates). Contact Person: David Bowen, Ohio

Deletions are in brackets, additions are underlined. Further information may be obtained from the NEA Governance and Policy office, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036 (telephone 202/822-7328).

Executive Committee Candidates

FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (TWO SEATS) Three-year terms beginning September 1, 1998

Denise Rockwell

It has been said that, "If you can't make school a great place for staff, it won't be a great place for kids." Those of us involved in educating and caring for the students in America's public schools too often face educational leadership in our school districts, on our school sites and campuses that is unsupportive, lacks respect for our knowledge and skills, limits our opportunities to act in a collegial fashion, allows little or no participation in the development of policy and curriculum that impacts our workplaces, and rarely asks for comments on the issues of equal access of students to quality learning and teaching environments.

These factors lead me to believe that the education family headed by the NEA requires leaders who will speak to these concerns with clarity and conviction in forums across this nation. I believe that the NEA must remain in the vanguard of advocacy on all issues affecting the welfare of students and the well being of education employees. There is no stronger or more reliable voice for public education.

Roger Sharp

Vision and leadership...words that articulate our organization's greatest needs. Daily, members face profound mandated changes...radical "reforms" debated by politicians far removed from the classroom. These changes threaten the integrity of our profession and are a danger to our students.

This campaign is about leadership. The Executive Committee must provide leadership to combat radical political initiatives that are intended to destroy the organization. Executive Committee members must be able to respond to crisis as well as have vision for the future.

I am proud to have worked with you in my role as an NEA Executive Committee member. As I look to the future of public education, I see a thriving institution with a strong NEA at its forefront.

Robert J. Gilchrist

Restoring Public Confidence in Public Education is NEA's strategic focus. OUR Focus! It's critical we maintain that focus in everything we do. We must keep the focus on children and education. Success in schools all across the country depends on it.

We must also be vigilant and realize everything our Association does affects our ability to succeed. The image we project as an organization impacts us all.

Much of our collective strength comes from our ability to work with other groups while maintaining our own independence. We must continue to strengthen alliances but preserve our autonomy. We have accomplished much as an organization. An independent organization devoted solely to education concerns will allow us to accomplish even more in the 21st century.

Principles of Unity

In 1995, RA delegates directed the NEA president to negotiate with the American Federation of Teachers on unifying NEA and AFT into one organization. Negotiating teams from NEA and AFT have subsequently prepared these Principles of Unity. To be adopted, these Principles must be approved, in secret ballot, by two-thirds of the delegates to the 1998 RA. For details: check www.nea.org/unity.

Our Mission

Three years ago, negotiators from the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association set out in a renewed effort to create a united institution.

From the beginning, leaders of both groups envisioned a new organization of men and women dedicated to providing a quality education for every child in America. An organization embodying the highest ideals and aspirations of its members. An organization willing to question familiar assumptions and explore new ideas. An organization better, not just bigger, than either the AFT or NEA alone.

Such an organization has been the goal of AFT and NEA policy for more than a generation. The elected representatives of both organizations now have the opportunity to make this vision a reality.

The AFT and NEA are both strong and successful institutions. Our success in building thoughtful, democratic organizations of educators has created an enduring legacy and transformed the lives of millions of children. Our work has attracted to both organizations professional and technical employees in health care and state and local government who have, in turn, helped us achieve goals important to our common future.

Today, we must all work together, as never before. Our accomplishments, as separate organizations, stand threatened. Our members face unprecedented assaults on public education and public service — and increasingly fierce attacks on their rights as working Americans.

Together, in a new United Organization, we can benefit from the wisdom, talent, and experience of AFT and NEA members the nation over.

Together, we can devote more energy to preserving America's schools — the public schools — joining with those who would also transform them to meet the challenging needs of a changing age.

Together, united in a reinvigorated labor movement, we can more effectively advance the cause of economic and social justice and civil and human rights.

Together, we can better serve America's children and those who educate them, strengthening democracy in our schools, in our workplaces, and in our nation.

Principle One: **The United Organization will champion public education.**

Free, universal public education — America's great contribution to democracy — succeeds when all citizens accept responsibility for its success. The United Organization will welcome, at every level, help in ensuring every child a quality public school. Toward that end:

• The United Organization will forge partnerships to help eliminate the inequities that deny students a safe and supportive learning environment.

• The United Organization will help members share and perfect their professional skills and insist on high standards throughout the education profession.

• The United Organization will devote substantial resources toward identifying and promoting practices and strategies that enhance student achievement.

Principle Two: **Education will be the United Organization's core membership jurisdiction.**

The United Organization will be deeply committed to improving the well-being of members and the communities they serve. The UO will help affiliates in all jurisdictions maintain their current organizations and organize new members. Toward that end:

➤ Education employees will be the United Organization core jurisdiction.

• This core jurisdiction will cover every category of employee in public education and education-related public agencies and institutions, from pre-school through graduate school and lifetime learning.

• The education jurisdiction will also extend to employees in non-public schools and programs, such as Head Start, funded by public tax dollars.

• The core jurisdiction will include pre-K to 12 teachers and other education professionals; paraprofessionals and education support personnel in all job categories; administrative personnel who are members of UO locals; and faculty, non-teaching professionals, and support staff in higher education.

➤ The United Organization will also include affiliates that represent professional and technical employees in health care and state and local government.

➤ Active members employed in all UO jurisdictions will enjoy full rights and services at the national, state, and local levels.

➤ Retired members will have rights and services consistent with those currently held in the AFT and NEA.

➤ Students preparing for careers in education will be eligible for membership in the United Organization.

➤ The United Organization will also create an at-large membership category for individuals who cannot join a local affiliate.

Principle Three: **The United Organization will reach decisions democratically.**

The United Organization created by the AFT and NEA will reflect a deep commitment to democratic principles and procedures — at every level. Members will run the United Organization. Toward that end:

➤ The highest governing body of the United Organization will be a convention whose delegates will be directly elected by members.

• Active members will elect convention delegates on a one-person, one-vote basis, with separate representational formulas for state and local affiliates that will produce an overall delegate total roughly equal to the number of delegates who currently attend the AFT Convention and NEA Representative Assembly.

• Retired members and students will also elect convention delegates, according to formulas developed for each membership category.

• All delegates will be elected in secret ballot elections conducted by United Organization state and local affiliates and comparable retiree and student organizations.

• Delegates from states will represent members from locals that do not send delegates.

• To allow smaller locals the opportunity to be represented at the convention, such locals will be able to form clusters to reach the threshold for electing a delegate.

• Education members will be represented at the United Organization convention by delegates from either their local or state affiliate.

• If not represented through their local union or state affiliate, members in health care or state and local government may be represented by delegates from a national-level council representing their jurisdiction.

• Unless otherwise elected as delegates, the national officers and state affiliate presidents will be automatic *ex officio* delegates to the United Organization convention.

• Delegates to the United Organization convention will determine UO policies and approve the UO budget.

➤ The United Organization convention will be held annually, until the first or second year of the second term of the officers elected under the permanent governance structure.

• At this time, convention delegates will cast one ballot to determine, by majority vote, whether national officers and Executive Board members will be limited to three four-year terms and whether conventions will be held every two years.

➤ The convention will conduct all elections and roll-call votes by democratic processes that insure that every member is represented, preserve the individual integrity of every delegate's vote, and hold delegates accountable to members.

• In elections and roll-call votes, counts will be recorded by state and local affiliate, but each individual delegate will vote by secret ballot.

• In such balloting, the membership voting strength of each local and state will be divided equally — weighted — among the number of each local and state's delegates present at the convention.

• Procedures will be established to protect the anonymity of a delegate casting a local's entire vote.

➤ Delegates to the convention will elect the seven United Organization national officers.

• The seven officers will serve as the United Organization's full-time executives.

• The national officers will serve four-year terms that begin in the same year.

• The president will be the chief executive officer, with primary responsibility for administering the affairs and carrying out the policies and programs of the organization.

• The second highest-ranking officer will be the executive vice-president, who will advise and assist the president, perform functions assigned by the president and governing bodies and documents, and act in place of the president when that officer is unable to fulfill the functions of the office.

• The secretary-treasurer will be the chief financial officer and the third highest-ranking officer, whose responsibilities will include collecting, safeguarding, and dispensing funds and administering United Organization properties.

• The four vice-presidents will advise and assist the president and carry out specific duties as assigned.

➤ The Executive Board will set United Organization policy between conventions.

• The Executive Board will include the seven national officers and 30 additional members elected at-large by delegates to the United Organization convention.

• Executive Board at-large members will serve four-year terms that begin the same year as the terms of the national officers.

• The Executive Board will meet seven times each year.

• The Executive Board will develop and recommend the UO budget to the convention and, between conventions, make necessary modifications.

➤ The Leadership Council, a broadly representative body, will advise, assist, and make policy and program recommendations to the United Organization convention, officers, and Executive Board.

• The approximately 400 members of the Leadership Council will include all Executive Board members, all state affiliate presidents, all presidents of local affiliates with 2,500 members or more, representatives from constituency groups, and members elected at-large from the states.

• One at-large Leadership Council seat in every state will be reserved for a representative of a small local.

• The Leadership Council will meet at least three times a year.

➤ The United Organization will seek out and involve the widest spectrum of leaders and help these leaders develop the skills necessary to help the organization succeed.

• Each of the three major areas of the core education constituency — pre-K-12 teachers and other professionals, paraprofessionals/education support personnel, and higher education faculty and staff — will have a constituency advisory board of affiliate leaders.

• The constituency advisory boards will provide each education constituency a forum for proposing recommendations to the UO Executive Board and developing a vision for constituents and the institutions they serve.

• Affiliates representing members in health care and state and local government will each have a council at the national level to help articulate the unique needs of their jurisdiction.

• Based on the recommendation of the UO president, the Executive Board will appoint constituency advisory board and council chairs and members.

• All chairs of constituency advisory boards will be Leadership Council members.

Principle Four: **The United Organization will strongly support affiliate efforts to serve members.**

State and local affiliates will be the foundation of the United Organization. States and locals will provide most basic services to members and will receive substantial support from the national organization. Toward that end:

➤ The United Organization will develop a full partnership with state affiliates to coordinate objectives and advance mutual interests.

• State affiliates will have a vital role in providing and coordinating services for affiliates and members.

• State affiliates will be the primary vehicle for providing programs and services of the United Organization to local affiliates and members.

• Coordinating with appropriate state affiliates, the United Organization may provide programs and services to local affiliates.

• A state within the United Organization will be defined to include the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Section VI and Overseas Dependent Schools.

➤ Self-governing autonomy for affiliates will be a keystone of the United Organization.

• State and local affiliates will elect their own officers and governing bodies and govern their internal affairs subject to United Organization standards.

• Local affiliates will remain free to negotiate and enforce contracts, decide how to settle grievances and litigation, set their own policy on professional issues, determine political endorsements for local offices within their own jurisdiction, and participate in endorsing state and national political candidates.

➤ The ultimate objective will be one affiliate in each state, but the United Organization will encourage, not require, such a structure.

• All state unity agreements will be subject to national approval, and the United Organization will establish guidelines and provide special assistance to promote such agreements.

• The United Organization will encourage unified state affiliates to respect staff rights in the workplace and retain state staff employed at the time of unification.

➤ The United Organization will develop guidelines for unified state organizations.

• These guidelines will encourage the creation of unified state affiliate structures that reflect, as much as possible and practical, the UO national structure in such key areas as the election of officers, governing bodies, and delegates, as well as the voting procedures at conventions, AFL-CIO affiliation, dues levels, and terms of office for officers and governing body members.

• A unified state structure will encourage the involvement of members from each UO predecessor organization, and representatives from the smaller former organization will be guaranteed representation for at least two terms in both state governing bodies and, where feasible, statewide office.

• State unity agreements will be considered for approval once the AFT Convention and NEA Representative Assembly approve these Principles of Unity.

➤ The United Organization will develop guidelines for cooperation between separate state affiliates within a state.

➤ The United Organization will set minimum standards for state affiliates and create a mechanism to assure compliance.

• All delegates to a state affiliate convention must be elected by secret ballot according to a membership formula that guarantees members representation on the basis of one person, one vote.

• State elections must comply with generally recognized procedures for democratic elections, from spelling out reasonable eligibility requirements for office in writing to prohibiting the use of union or employer funds in election campaigns.

• Independent audits must be conducted annually, presented to the state governing body, and filed with the United Organization.

• A state must not discriminate against members or those seeking membership on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or physical disability.

• Members and local affiliates must have access to due process before they are censured, suspended, or expelled.

• A state affiliate will not accept as an active member an individual employed in a job category not included in the UO jurisdictions without UO approval.

➤ The ultimate United Organization objective will be one affiliate in each local jurisdiction.

• Where locals are organized by different job categories — one local representing teachers, for instance, and the other, support personnel — the individual locals may retain their status as separate locals.

• Where former AFT and NEA locals that represent members in the same jurisdiction are unable to unify, the United Organization will rely on state affiliates to promote unification and will help states in this effort.

• Where former AFT and NEA locals in the same jurisdiction do not unify by a date to be determined, the United Organization will charter the local recognized as the collective bargaining agent or, in jurisdictions without collective bargaining, the local recognized as the exclusive representative, provided that the employees had chosen that local as their representative in a secret-ballot election.

• In jurisdictions where neither the AFT nor NEA local is recognized as the sole employee representative, the United Organization will develop guidelines for determining the local UO affiliate.

➤ The United Organization will set minimum standards for local affiliates.

• A local must not discriminate against members or those seeking membership on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or physical disability.

• Members must have access to due process before they are censured, suspended, or expelled.

➤ Local affiliates with members in the health care and state and local government jurisdictions can be part of one of three state-level structures in the United Organization.

• These locals may be part of a single state affiliate that includes all local affiliates in the state.

• In states where there is not a single state UO affiliate, these locals may be part of a second state affiliate that includes members in more than one jurisdiction.

• In states where a unified state affiliate does not include locals in health care or state and local government, these locals, with the approval of the United Organization and in consultation with other affiliates, may create a state council for all local health care or state and local government affiliates.

➤ Affiliates in health care or state and local government that want to form a state council must meet specific criteria to ensure their ability to deliver high quality services to members.

Principles of Unity

continued from previous page

• These affiliates must have a membership and income sufficient to support the staff and programs necessary to provide a broad range of services to members.

• These affiliates must have an organized presence in multiple locations around the state.

• These affiliates must have the capacity to meet the same standards as state affiliates.

➤ To protect member rights, the United Organization will have the power to investigate and resolve disputes within and among affiliates.

• The United Organization may establish trusteeships to restore democratic procedures or remedy corruption or financial malpractice.

• In all dispute situations resolved by the United Organization, the affiliates involved will have access to an appeals process.

***Principle Five:* The United Organization will provide the highest quality services to members.**

To become effective advocates for quality education, the members of the United Organization will need support from every level of the new organization. Both the AFT Organizational Assistance Program and the NEA UniServ program have served members well. The United Organization will help affiliates build upon these and other current services and break new ground to improve service quality. Toward that end:

➤ The United Organization will offer a financial support program that helps affiliates deliver services to members.

• Financial support from the United Organization will be distributed by a formula keyed to the number of members in a servicing unit.

• A servicing unit may be defined as either a single local affiliate or a group of locals clustered to receive financial support.

• Every 1,200 members will entitle a servicing unit to a UO contribution toward the cost of a full-time position, with that contribution prorated for a part-time position or for a position supporting fewer than 1,200 members.

➤ The United Organization and state affiliates will jointly finance and administer the UO local staffing program, and the positions the United Organization helps fund will provide members the services essential to successful local advocacy.

➤ An individual holding a position supported by the UO local staffing program will perform such services as:

• Organizing new members, retaining current members, and creating volunteer opportunities to serve members and the community.

• Helping members develop professionally and building community support for initiatives to improve the quality of education.

• Representing members in negotiations and other interactions between labor and management as well as keeping members informed about local activities.

• Facilitating cooperation among members and providing the training necessary to help affiliates function more effectively.

• Building the systems and providing the training necessary to support political candidates and legislation at the local, state, and national levels.

➤ Individuals in positions supported by United Organization funding may be either professional staff or release-time officers.

• The total number of positions supported through the NEA UniServ program and the AFT Organizational Assistance Program will continue to be supported and maintained in the United Organization.

• Former AFT affiliates qualifying for United Organization assistance will retain the option of using release-time officers, professional staff, or some combination of the two for all positions.

• Both former AFT and NEA affiliates may fill new positions created by membership growth within a state with either professional staff or release-time officers.

➤ Local affiliates that meet basic qualifying criteria can receive United Organization support for administering and funding their own local service programs.

• To qualify, a local must have a number of members to be determined, total dues that at least equal the average dues of all locals in the state, and an automatic dues escalator that raises total dues to include state and national dues increases.

• A qualifying local must also engage in labor relations advocacy and support members in their efforts to develop professionally and improve the quality of education.

• Finally, a local must be willing to take part in leadership and staff development training provided at the state and national level, be available to assist other affiliates, and conduct periodic evaluations of its servicing program.

• State affiliates will provide financial support that allows locals to participate in the program and will monitor use of this assistance.

➤ The Executive Board of the United Organization will employ an UO executive director.

• This individual, who will be recommended to the Executive Board by the UO president, will work under the president's direction, and will supervise UO staff.

➤ The United Organization values the experience and contributions of current national AFT and NEA staff and is committed to utilizing their skills and knowledge to benefit all UO members.

➤ United Organization national dues will be set by a formula that generates the revenue adequate to support the services members need.

• National dues in the United Organization will be comparable to the national dues that would have been in place if the AFT and NEA had remained separate organizations

• State and local UO affiliates will set their own dues levels, as they do now within both the AFT and NEA.

***Principle Six:* The United Organization will foster diversity.**

No institution in American life can do more to build respect for diversity than public education. The United Organization will strive to become a model for the tolerant and integrated nation that educators are working to create. Toward that end:

➤ The United Organization will maintain — and seek to expand — current AFT and NEA levels of minority representation throughout leadership, governance, and staff.

• The United Organization will promote programs and adopt policies designed to involve ethnic minority members in UO activities and decision making.

• United Organization governing bodies will be expandable, a capability that will make possible enhanced ethnic minority representation.

➤ The United Organization will adopt an employment program designed to recruit and employ ethnic minority staff members at all levels of the organization.

***Principle Seven:* The United Organization will work for a strong, democratic, and effective labor movement.**

The well-being of America's children and families demands the economic and social justice that only a strong, democratic labor movement can provide. The United Organization shall be committed to building an effective, modern labor presence in American life. Toward that end:

➤ The United Organization will be a national affiliate of the AFL-CIO.

• The United Organization will work to build a strong, unified labor movement and endeavor to strengthen organized labor at the national, state, and local levels.

• The United Organization's initial affiliation with the national AFL-CIO will be based on 1.4 million members, a level that will make the United Organization the largest single affiliate within the AFL-CIO.

• The United Organization will make per capita payments to the national AFL-CIO for the UO's national affiliation.

• Once affiliates of the United Organization affiliate 1.4 million members with state AFL-CIO bodies, the membership base for determining the United Organization's national AFL-CIO affiliation will rise annually by the number of members newly affiliated and by increases in the membership already affiliated with state AFL-CIO organizations.

➤ The United Organization's goal will be full affiliation with the AFL-CIO at every level.

• The United Organization will provide educational materials and programs that encourage local and state affiliates to affiliate fully with state and local AFL-CIO bodies.

➤ State affiliates of the United Organization will determine their own relationship with the AFL-CIO.

• A state may affiliate its entire membership with the state AFL-CIO organization and make per capita payments for these members.

• If a state affiliate does not fully affiliate with the state AFL-CIO organization, individual locals within the state could affiliate with the state AFL-CIO.

➤ At the local level, affiliation with local AFL-CIO organizations will remain the decision of local affiliates of the United Organization.

➤ State and local UO affiliates that are affiliated with AFL-CIO state and local organizations will make per capita payments to the appropriate AFL-CIO body.

• To affiliate with the AFL-CIO, a current or former NEA state affiliate must first unify with the current or former AFT state affiliate.

• To affiliate with the AFL-CIO, a current or former NEA local in a jurisdiction with an AFT affiliate must unite with its AFT counterpart.

• In states with more than one UO state affiliate, no former NEA local in a jurisdiction where there is no AFT counterpart may affiliate with the AFL-CIO without the agreement of the former AFT state affiliate.

• The United Organization will resolve any disputes between state and local affiliates over AFL-CIO affiliation.

➤ All affiliates of the United Organization that were AFL-CIO affiliates before the AFT and NEA unite will remain affiliated with the AFL-CIO at all levels.

***Principle Eight:* The United Organization unification process will involve members and respect the past.**

The launching of a new national organization must actively involve the men and women AFT and NEA members have elected to represent them. The United Organization will be created through a process that respects the democratic traditions and heritage of both organizations. Toward that end:

➤ The adoption of these Principles of Unity by delegates to the 1998 AFT Convention and NEA Representative Assembly will constitute a formal commitment to create a United Organization.

➤ For a period of time after this vote, the AFT and NEA will continue to operate separately until the United Organization formally comes into existence.

• During this period, existing AFT and NEA state affiliates will be free to unite, provided the AFT and NEA approve these mergers.

➤ Upon the adoption of these Principles of Unity, AFT and NEA will create a broadly representative joint committee to draft both a Constitution and Bylaws for the United Organization and a Unification Agreement.

• The proposed Constitution and Bylaws will reflect these Principles of Unity and define the specific structures, operations, and name of the United Organization.

• The proposed Unification Agreement will define the specific organizational and procedural steps necessary before the United Organization officially begins operation.

[NOTE: When completed, these Principles of Unity will include a specific timetable defining more completely the process of creating and making fully operational the United Organization, as well as a structure that will include founding presidents – with the NEA president assuming the duties of president and the AFT president assuming the duties of executive vice-president – and an interim Executive Board composed of the seven national officers and 15 members designated by the AFT and 15 members designated by NEA.]

NEA Board of Directors

The NEA Board of Directors consists of at least one director from each Association affiliated with the NEA as a state affiliate, plus an additional director for each 20,000 NEA Active members in the state, six directors for the Retired members of the Association, and three directors for the Student members of the Association.

The Board may also include at-large representatives of ethnic minorities, administrators, classroom teachers in higher education, and Active members employed in educational support positions. The Board meets four times a year, plus one meeting in conjunction with the Annual Meeting.

The NEA executive officers and other members of the NEA Executive Committee are ex officio members of the Board of Directors.

Alabama: Linda Garrett, Eunice Horton, Patsy Parker, Peggy Mobley

Alaska: Richard Kronberg

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Honorary: John Lucas

My Turn

Where Unity's a Fact of Life

Speaking from experience, a San Francisco teacher says unity will boost the bottom line—student learning.

By Tom Ruiz

As our colleagues across the country discuss the implications of a united national organization of educators, I'd like to talk about a school district where thousands of NEA and AFT members are already unified.

In San Francisco, all members belong to a merged local affiliated with both national education unions—NEA and the American Federation of Teachers—and their state affiliates.

By joining together as the United Educators of San Francisco, we've been able to focus on issues that truly concern our members and direct our energies to redesigning our schools into high-performance learning communities.

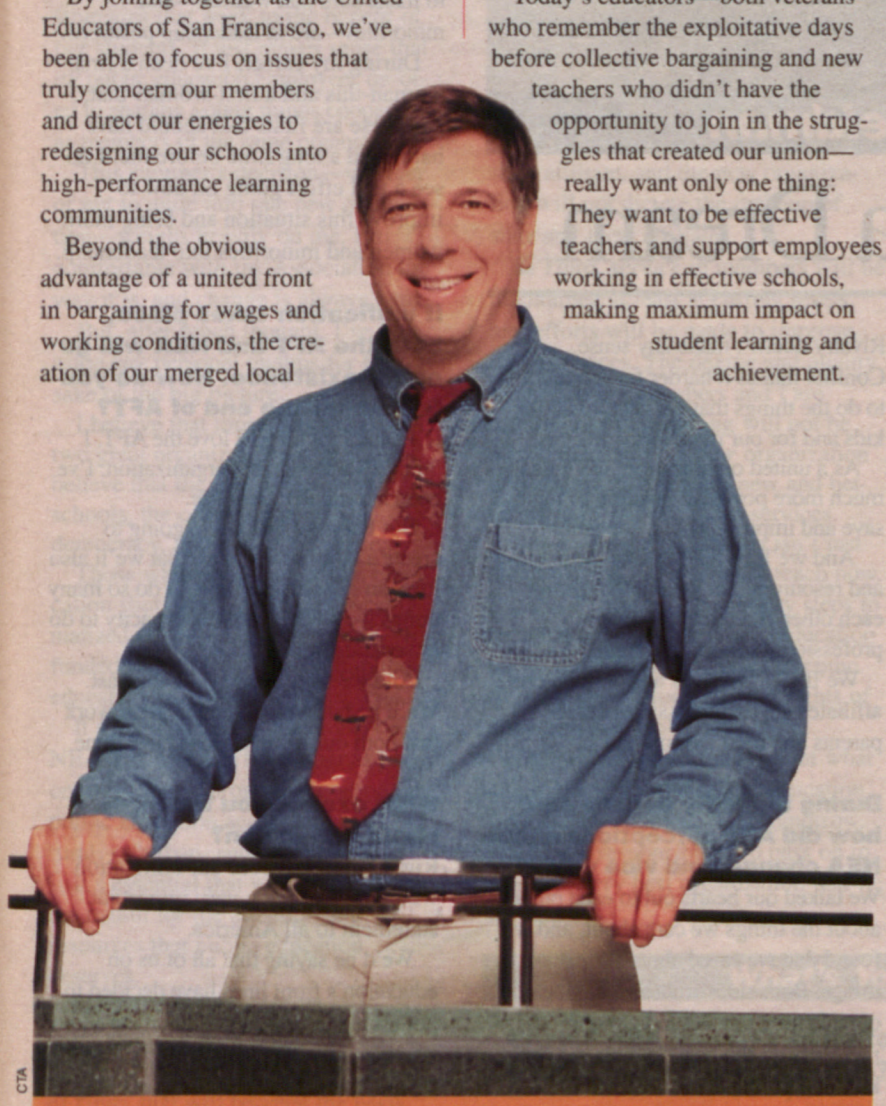
Beyond the obvious advantage of a united front in bargaining for wages and working conditions, the creation of our merged local has enabled teachers and paraprofessionals here to launch, with district officials, a very successful Restructuring Schools Initiative.

Now schools throughout the district routinely examine how students learn, teachers teach, and administrators manage—all with the goal of achieving maximum student performance.

Given our experience, it stands to reason that a national merger will enable NEA and the AFT to throw off their industrial-era shackles of bread-and-butter unionism.

We can never give up on the need to provide better economic security for our members and our families. But a national organization of united educators will allow us to direct our dues dollars to today's priorities—increasing professionalism and boosting student learning.

Today's educators—both veterans who remember the exploitative days before collective bargaining and new teachers who didn't have the opportunity to join in the struggles that created our union—really want only one thing: They want to be effective teachers and support employees working in effective schools, making maximum impact on student learning and achievement.



CTA

Tom Ruiz, a teacher at the International Studies Academy in San Francisco, is currently on special assignment with the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative. He can be reached at truiz@wested.org.

Educators know that teaching and learning are complex, intertwined processes affected by many factors both inside and outside the classroom. A united national organization, freed from partisan duels and well-meaning but duplicative efforts, will truly concentrate on the things that make the difference in the lives of so many of our students.

In San Francisco, in just the last few years, a united organization has helped us to:

- Sponsor quarterly forums that allow teachers to gather and share what they've learned about teaching and site-based decision making.
- Provide professional support to new staff members and veterans who need it—without negative repercussions.
- Begin to reinvent school management as a democratic process, where parents, neighbors, students, teachers, support staff, and administrators are all involved in making the decisions that affect them, their communities, and their futures.
- Begin to rethink our professional development opportunities, making them the province of teachers, rather than the central office.

A united national organization could bring local initiatives like these to state and national scale—and do so much more. It could:

- Collect and disseminate the best teaching practices and professional development experiences from all schools across the country, so we can more easily learn from one another.
- Bring a common-sense approach to the battery of standards at the national, state, and local levels—an approach that will help us improve teaching, not dictate content and lesson plans.
- Build up the national partnerships our public school communities need to make learning more relevant and connected to the workplaces of our students' families.
- Save public education from those who would privatize it, squeeze profits from it, and let student learning become a back-burner issue.

As education innovator Phil Schlechty says, "Real reform is real hard." We need all the support our new united national organization will be able to provide to make the changes needed for our students—and ourselves.

You Said It

Bill Fischer, editor

We're hearing many good things about the wide range of resources we've added to *NEA Today* over the past year or so.

But sometimes we hear from members who've attempted to sign on to a hot new Web site, only to see an error message pop up that says your Web browser can't locate the site address. And some E-mail addresses just don't work.

Before computers and the Internet, sources of information and people's addresses didn't change so fast. You could be pretty confident that if you checked an address once, it would be correct weeks later.

Now, Web site and E-mail addresses change overnight, and many of the changes are difficult to pick up without careful scrutiny.

A couple of issues ago, for instance, we listed a Web site for the Charles Schwab Foundation and its teacher grants program. A week or so after the issue came off press, we found out that a period separating one part of the address should have been a hyphen. Without that hyphen, our readers were out of luck trying to reach the site.

Another problem: Web site addresses at the ends of sentences. If you type in a period at the end of the address, you won't find the site.

We're taking special precautions to keep these electronic bugaboos out of *NEA Today*. A staff person calls each 800 number and tries each E-mail address and Web site just before the issue goes to press. But the process isn't perfect and sites and addresses do change.

Special note: This is the last issue of *NEA Today* for the current school year. As you're reading this, we're putting together plans for next year's stories.

We hope that you've found a lot in *NEA Today* to use in your work and that you'll let us know about topics you'd like to see covered in future issues.

Send your ideas directly to me online at neatoday@nea.org, or by any one of the ways listed on the Letters page, page 51.

Bill Fisher

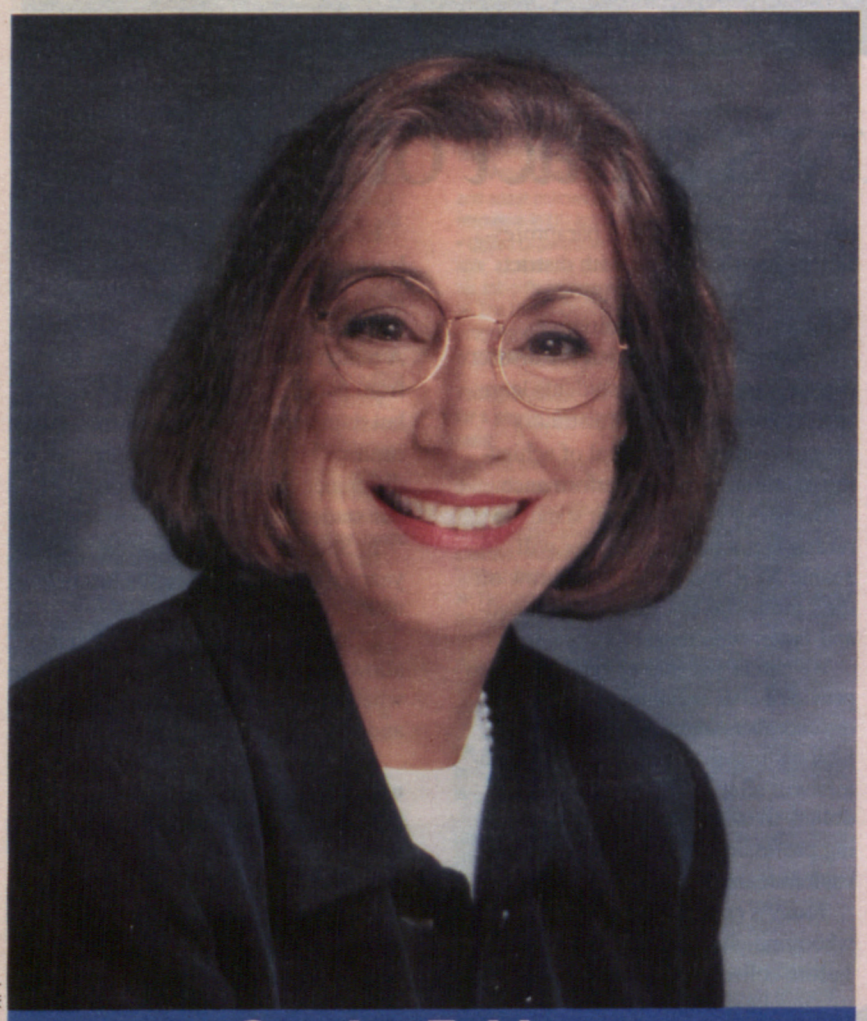
Meet

A poor kid sees a richer future for America's schools.

If delegates to this July's NEA and AFT conventions vote to create a new organization for America's educators, a good bit of the credit for this historic step toward educator unity will likely go to a fourth grade teacher from New York City.

That teacher is Sandra Feldman, the president of the 950,000-member American Federation of Teachers. Feldman, 58, led the AFT negotiating team in the AFT/NEA unity talks.

Earlier this spring, NEA Today*'s Sam Pizzigati spoke with Feldman, the immediate past president of AFT's New York City local, about her many years in public education—and the future she envisions for America's kids.*



AFT

Sandra Feldman

She Has a Dream

What impact did public education have on you personally?
Public education meant everything for me. I grew up in difficult circumstances. We lived in a poor Coney Island neighborhood, and my family had very little.

I had no books at home. But I had a second grade teacher who knew I liked to read. She bought me books—and opened up a whole new world.

I can't imagine what my life would have been like without my public education. School was a total revelation for me. I think that's why I'm totally, passionately, committed to making sure we have good schools for every child.

When did you first know that you wanted to teach?
In college, I was an English major and very active in the civil rights movement. After college, I did odd jobs so I could stay involved in the movement.

I participated in the Route 40 Freedom Rides, and I also had the opportunity to be on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial when Martin Luther King gave his *I Have a Dream* speech. I was a few steps behind him. That was one of the great moments of my life.

Meanwhile, I'd been doing some substitute teaching, and I got a job with a full-term assignment.

But I slowly lost control of my class, and, at the end of the year, in June, I left. I just felt that I needed to get more education on how to do this job of teaching, which I then did.

When I went back to teaching, I was lucky enough to have an experienced teacher as a mentor. That started me on the way to becoming a good teacher.

Looking back, I think I ended up teaching because I love kids and wanted a job that was meaningful.

What led you to become involved in your AFT local?
I came into teaching as a civil rights activist and found a situation, in the schools, where people were treated very badly. My activism in the union just came naturally.

You travel all around the country. What do you hear?
People in education love children. That's the one universal I find.

But many people are frustrated. They can't do the job they want to do because of the system they're in. They don't have supplies. They don't have books. They don't get the professional development they need.

Still, teachers and school staff are doing a lot of heroic work out there, and millions of children are being saved—thanks sometimes to just the sheer grit and dedication of teachers and staff.

How will a new, united organization help educators?
We've wasted a lot of energy competing with each other. It's inexcusable. The people the AFT and NEA represent have the same needs and the same goals. Rivalry doesn't make any sense. Conflict makes it harder for our unions to do the things that we need to do for kids and for our members.

As a united organization, we'll be in a much more powerful position to fight to save and improve public education.

And we'll be able to take the energy and resources that went into fighting each other and really develop professional support programs.

We'll also be better able to help our affiliates get their messages out to parents and their communities.

During the unity negotiations, how did AFT perceptions about NEA change, and vice versa?
We talked our hearts out to each other about the things we care about, and we found that we cared about the same things. Both sides wanted a democratic organization that could help our members do the best possible job for kids and public education.

That doesn't mean that we didn't have our differences. We had some major, knock-down, drag-out fights. But we kept our eye on the ball. We worked hard at coming up with something that is going to be better, not just different, than what we have now. And that's taking nothing away from our current AFT and NEA. We're uniting two strong, healthy organizations.

How have AFT members benefited from AFL-CIO affiliation?
The AFL-CIO has been enormously helpful to us, especially on legislation. We've received help and support from the AFL-CIO on every education issue. The AFL-CIO has been there for children and families. These are caring people who want to see working families get decent health care, decent housing, and good schools for their kids.

We've also worked to help people in other unions, people who are less fortunate than we are, like the farmworkers. That's a good feeling.

For some NEA members, the AFL-CIO seems a male world. Is this image accurate?
Not today. Over 40 percent of the members of AFL-CIO unions are women. But I do think that unions, and teacher unions, too, haven't done enough to make sure that women—and minorities—are in leadership positions.

During my career, I've been a first-woman-this and a first-woman-that, and these are firsts that should have happened a long time before me. I do see a real effort going on now to improve this situation and bring more women and minorities into leadership.

If unification takes place, both the AFT and NEA will go out of existence. How do you feel about the end of AFT?
It's a difficult thing. I love the AFT. I think it's a wonderful organization. I've been in it all my adult life.

But I believe that we're going to create a new organization that we'll also love, an organization able to do so many things we haven't had the capacity to do as separate organizations.

And we won't be erasing the past. We'll be building on all the great work that both our organizations have done.

What excites you the most about unification?
Right out of the box, our unification would be making a very important statement to all America.

We'd be saying that all of us on education's front lines have decided to put aside our differences to create a new organization that really delivers for kids. To me, this is extraordinarily exciting.

And when America sees that our actions match our rhetoric, I think that most people are going to see our unity as a good thing for kids, a good thing for schools, and a good thing for our nation.

Debate

Should NEA and AFT Unite To Form One New Organization?

Joe Di Dio

Yes

Jerry Vath, a 24-year elementary art teacher and president-elect of the Lebanon Education Association, serves on the Pennsylvania State Education Association's communications committee and the NEA Today Local Editor Advisory Board. He can be reached via E-mail at mergeyes@lancnews.infi.net.

It just makes sense for two groups—both committed to serving the millions of children in our public schools and to protecting the rights of the employees who work in those settings—to join forces in the creation of the largest organization in the world dedicated to public education.

Education thrives on cooperation: the sharing of ideas, experiences, and strategies that work to the benefit of our students. It just makes sense that *all* public education employees devoted to shaping young minds cooperate as members of the same organization.

This summer's decision—whether or not to unite into one new organization—weighs heavily on me. I'm comfortable with my Association the way it is, and change is always hard.

But, after much thought, I've put aside any personal qualms for the sake of the big picture.

I believe that more than the fate of two great organizations is at stake. I believe that the fate of our public schools, the cornerstone of our democracy, hangs in the balance.

Those who would see public education shut down, privatized, or dogmatized are well organized and well funded. Those who support public education must meet the challenge.

It's essential that the members of NEA and AFT work together as one organization to promote the good that public education accomplishes in our rural, suburban, and urban schools.

It's essential that we unite to lobby the nation for the attention and resources that public education deserves.

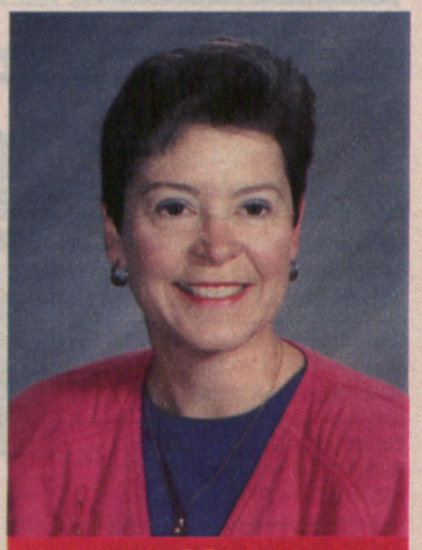
Now is the right time. The negotiating teams of both organizations have reached consensus on Principles of Unity that will become the basis for a new united organization.

Agreement on just three of the key principles is enough to convince me that the new united organization is one I can support, work with, and proudly promote as the champion of public education.

- First, the new organization will be a democratic, deliberative body. I will continue to have a voice in its operations and decision making through my direct participation, if I so choose, or through my representatives whom I will have a right to elect.
- Second, state and local autonomy will be maintained. I will have a say in how my state organization and my local Association operate. I will continue to receive services through my state affiliate, and the new organization will not dictate the makeup of state and local affiliates.
- Third, service to members will be maintained at least at current levels, and efforts will be made to improve those services. The degree and quality of service my members and I are accustomed to receiving will not be diminished, and the new organization will continually explore new and better ways to provide those services.

But the new organization isn't just about me and the students I teach now. It's about taking the necessary steps to ensure a free, quality public education for all our citizens for years to come. And it's about protecting the rights of those entrusted to do the job.

The new organization is about what union is best for the public education students and employees of tomorrow. We have a responsibility to pass on to them the very best organization that we can.



No

Jolene Franken, a 30-year elementary school teacher in Denison, Iowa, serves on the NEA Board of Directors. A longtime activist, she has served as local president and as a member of the Iowa State Education Association's executive board. Franken can be reached via E-mail at FRANKLYJO@aol.com.

I grew up in a pro-union household. In fact, my father was president of his local union. I wholeheartedly support unions and value the countless contributions they've made to this country over the years.

But I didn't become a teacher to strengthen the American union movement. And that, I fear, is the real purpose behind the proposed merger between NEA and the American Federation of Teachers.

Negotiating teams from both the NEA and the AFT have already agreed that the new organization would be affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

Initially, at least, that affiliation would only be required on the national level. According to the current agreement, local and state affiliates would be able to make their own decisions on AFL-CIO affiliation.

I'm concerned about what such a hodgepodge of affiliations would actually mean to individual members. But more important, I wonder how long it would be before the affiliation decision would no longer be voluntary.

NEA's top leaders would be under tremendous pressure to deliver all their members to the AFL-CIO. Already, the Principles of Unity indicate that the "United Organization's goal will be full affiliation with the AFL-CIO at every level."

Now I firmly believe that we can—and should—work together with our friends in the labor movement whenever it is to our mutual benefit. We already do that in Iowa, and it works quite well. The "no-raid" agreement between the NEA and the AFT is proof that we can work together without giving up our autonomy.

But formal affiliation with AFT and the AFL-CIO threatens both our membership and our mission.

First, if we are forced to affiliate with the AFL-CIO, those of us who work in "right-to-work" states—where we have to go out and earn our members one by one—stand to lose those very members.

Believe me, there are plenty of "professional" organizations out there literally salivating at the prospect of swooping in and taking away members who aren't willing to wear the union label.

Second, affiliation with the AFL-CIO dilutes our mission. As an organization, our sole focus must remain on children and education. We can't let anything divert our attention or dilute our ability to achieve our goals.

My first and foremost concern is my students. That's why I became a teacher. That's why I joined NEA 30 years ago and why I want to belong to NEA for the rest of my life.

NEA has survived and thrived as an organization for 141 years. Generations of educators have proudly belonged to NEA and have contributed to its ability to serve children and education so well.

If we create a new organization, NEA will cease to exist. I can't stand by and let that happen.

Much time and energy has already been devoted to the so-called "unity talks"—talks that have the potential to tear us apart.

I suggest we put that time and energy into finding ways that bring us together so we can remain relevant and meaningful in our members' lives and continue to make a difference for children and education for generations to come.

What's Your Opinion?

Should NEA and AFT unite to form one new organization?

To express your opinions, check **www.nea.org/unity** and post your comments there.

Should nationally certified teachers be paid more?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
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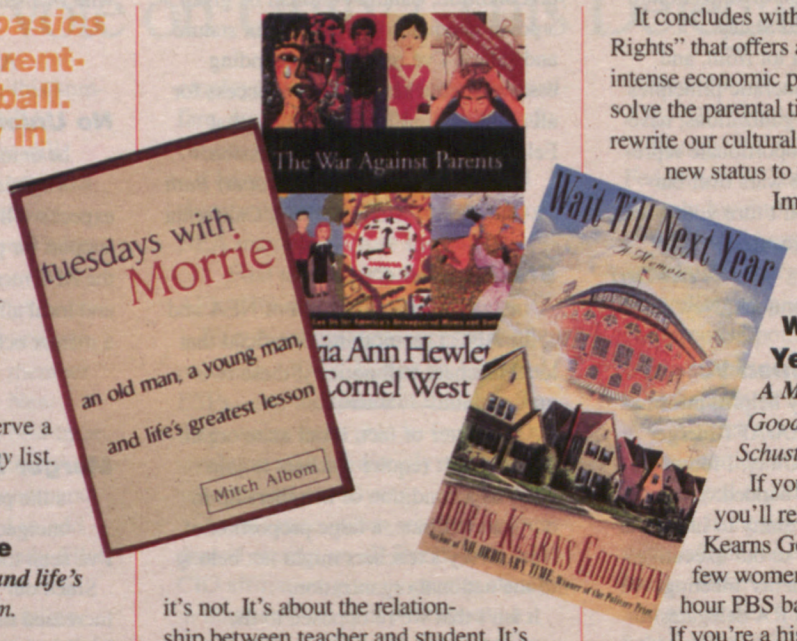
tuesdays with Morrie
an old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson
Mitch Albom
The War Against Parents
Wait Till Next Year
A Memoir
Doris Kearns Goodwin

It won't be long before you hand your students their assigned summer reading lists—and start working on your own. These three powerful, meaningful, and simply wonderful titles deserve a top spot on your list—on *any* list. They're just terrific reads.

Tuesdays with Morrie

An old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson. *Mitch Albom. Doubleday, 192 pp., $19.95.*

While channel surfing one night, Detroit sports writer Mitch Albom saw his favorite college professor, Morrie Schwartz, on *Nightline*. Schwartz was talking about his imminent death from Lou Gehrig's disease and his plans to make the rest of his time worthwhile.

"I'm on the last great journey here," Schwartz says, "and people want me to tell them what to pack."

For several months, Albom and Schwartz spend Tuesdays together talking about what's really important in life and what it means to face death.

If it sounds depressing, surprisingly it's not. It's about the relationship between teacher and student. It's about making time. It's about life.

The War Against Parents

What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads. *Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West. Houghton Mifflin, 284 pp., $24.*

If it ever occurs to you how hard it is to be a parent these days, read this book.

Written by economist and parent activist Sylvia Hewlett and Harvard professor Cornel West, this books outlines a 30-year "silent war" against parents waged by "big business, government, and the wider culture."

It concludes with "A Parents' Bill of Rights" that offers a way to "relieve the intense economic pressures on parents, solve the parental time famine, and rewrite our cultural script so as to lend new status to the parental role."

Important words—to parents, grandparents, and teachers.

Wait Till Next Year

A Memoir. *Doris Kearns Goodwin. Simon & Schuster, 264 pp., $25.*

If you're a baseball fan, you'll remember Doris Kearns Goodwin as one of the few women on Ken Burns's 18-hour PBS baseball documentary. If you're a history buff, you'll remember her as the Pulitzer-winning author of *No Ordinary Time*, a book about FDR and Eleanor during the war years.

This book is an utterly engaging memoir about growing up in the '50s devoted to the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Roman Catholic church—in that order. But you don't have to be a baseball fan or a Catholic to appreciate it.

This is as good and true a book as you'll ever read about a girl connecting with her family, friends, neighbors, and, yes, with her inspired teachers.

—Stefanie Weiss, David Sheridan

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) This booklet is loaded with practical advice for new teachers, including how to land a job, manage student conduct, get along with administrators, maintain personal priorities, and much more. (#2151-7-00-FB)

2 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-00-FB)

3 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50) This compact book answers your questions about block scheduling. (#2159-2-00-FB)

4 Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (Grades 6-12). Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. ($15.95) Ways to stop and prevent students from harassing one another. (#1864-8-00-FB)

5 Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans: Fun Tales from NEA Members. ($6.95) Enjoy this heartwarming collection of more than 90 humorous stories from the classroom. (#1880-X-00-FB)

6 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. A perfect gift, this book includes 1,001 classroom-tested tips. (#2150-9-00-FB)

7 Inspiring Quality in Your School. Robert A. Sullo. ($14.95) This book shows why *you* are the most important person to inspire quality in your school. (#2951-8-00-FB)

8 The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-00-FB)

9 Multiple Intelligences. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Find out how your colleagues are adapting their teaching strategies to take advantage of the seven intelligences. (#2910-0-10-FB)

10 Bullyproof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Fourth and Fifth Grade Students. Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. ($15.95) "Bullyproof" your classroom with these teacher-tested lessons. (#1873-7-10-FB)

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Books by NEA Members

The Complete Guide to the National Park Lodges
David L. Scott and Kay W. Scott. *The Globe Pequot Press, 240 pp., $16.95 plus $3.95 s&h, 800/243-0495 ext. 528, E-mail: pgreenho@globe-pequot.com.* Don't like camping? Check out this comprehensive guide to many of the lodges and permanent accommodations available in national park areas. Includes descriptions, maps, rates, phone numbers, and more.

Educating Your Star Child
Ed Mayhew and Mary Mayhew. *Sunstar Publishing, 236 pp.,$16.95 plus $3.50 s&h, 800/742-6139.* Seven steps to parenting smarter kids, plus details on "mega brain power boosters" that can help boost your child's intelligence.

How To Collect North American Indian Artifacts
Robert F. Brand. *151 pp., $13.45, plus $2 s&h, 610/437-5638.* A Pennsylvania teacher and historian shares his 20 years of experience in collecting Indian artifacts. Includes photos and illustrations. Geared to junior high and middle school students.

A Gentlemen's Guide to Childcare
James Muckle. *KSJ Publishing, 18 pp., $3 includes s&h, 800/356-9315.* This little booklet offers advice on how to take care of children ages one to five. Includes tips on dealing with routines, noise, anger, feeding, and fighting.

Crooked Tree
Esther Bender. *Herald Press, 32 pp., $9 (study guide $6), plus $1.50 s&h, 800/245-7894.* Why does a tree grow crooked? That question inspires this fictional account of the generations that live near an oak tree over the course of its 200-year lifespan. Geared to students in grades 1-6.

Letters

A Special Report on the AFT/NEA Unity Negotiations

One Organization For All America's Educators?

Editor's Note: Your response to the special section in our April issue on unity talks between NEA and the American Federation of Teachers has been overwhelming.

To facilitate a full debate on unity, we've chosen to print as many of your letters on the topic as we can. Want to join this discussion on unity before the upcoming vote at July's Representative Assembly? Just post your opinion on the Web at www.nea.org/unity.

Eyes on the Prize

I fully support the merger between our two unions.

The enemies of public education have targeted teacher unions as the main obstacle in their attacks on public schools. They draw no distinction between NEA and the AFT.

We shouldn't allow provincial interests and territorial narrowness to stand in the way of our common interests and unity. Of course, we must pay close attention to the details of the merger process, but we must also keep our eyes on the prize.

Fred Klonsky
Park Ridge, Illinois

No to the AFL-CIO

Many members from my local will drop their membership if NEA becomes associated with the AFL-CIO.

I think all members should vote on this important issue, not just the 10,000 delegates elected to represent us at the NEA Representative Assembly.

Jeff Weaver
McGaheysville, Virginia

Democracy Compromised

Certainly one organization for all educators would be a good idea. But I see no reason to unite under the current plans, which compromise the democratic premise upon which NEA was founded and has prospered.

While it's true that sometimes NEA goes overboard on social issues that may not directly impact educators and education, I'd rather err on the side of these excesses than find my organization moving away from the democratic tenets that have made it the largest organization of educators in the United States.

The AFT can learn a lot from, and thrive within, the democratic principles of NEA. Merge the organizations, have joint counsels with proportionate representation, and stop the wars over bargaining rights. But don't turn your backs on the basis for our greatness.

Peter Tirri
Pequannock, New Jersey

Becoming Informed Voters

Thanks for the very helpful information about the NEA/AFT merger and the Principles of Unity. I found the information to be fair-handed.

I've taken the opportunity to invite our local AFL-CIO group to our executive board and local presidents' meeting. We want our teachers and RA delegates to have the greatest amount of information, so they can make a decision reflective of our members' preference in this matter.

Phyllis Sorensen, president
Utah Education Association

Unity's Working—Already

It seems to me that all of the basic principles that we in the NEA hold near and dear are embedded in the Principles of Unity, so I'm all for it.

Members of my local NEA affiliate have already had many positive experiences working with local AFL-CIO unions, including the AFT.

We've had tremendous success building a council of local public employee organizations, most of which are affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The council increases our clout, particularly in the political arena.

And some of us have been working with AFT members in an exciting network called TURN—the Teacher Union Reform Network. If the collaboration between NEA and AFT locals in this network is any indication of what national unity will be like, I'd say we're headed for exciting times indeed.

Mark Simon
Montgomery County, Maryland

Not 'Just a Union'

The Iowa State Education Association has opposed AFL-CIO affiliation for years.

In a "right-to-work" state like ours, affiliating with the AFL-CIO could cause a great membership drop. If members here think we are "just a union," they'll stop joining and flock to the Professional Educators of Iowa.

We can work with labor without joining it. We do it already.

Bob Gilchrist, president
Iowa State Education Association

A Vote for Feldman

I'm all for a merger between NEA and the AFT. But I'd suggest that, as a precondition, Sandra Feldman be given a position equal to Bob Chase in stature and salary. I've read her outstanding essays on vouchers and equal access for all children, and it's clear to me that Feldman's a credit to our profession.

Robert Bath
Mission Viejo, California

Stating the Case

I'm against the unification of NEA and the AFT. I see nothing beneficial that local teachers will notice if these two groups unite.

As a matter of fact, if our state organization didn't require teachers to join NEA as a condition of membership in our state affiliate, a large proportion of New Jersey's teachers might not belong to the national organization.

It isn't that we're opposed to the national group. It's just that we have such an effective state organization that the benefits of belonging to the national unit are not very apparent.

George Eby
Salem, New Jersey

Force To Be Reckoned With

The proposed unification of NEA and the AFT is based on a wonderful concept. I believe the two forces united would form an organization to be reckoned with.

My concerns lie with the intent of some of the structural changes. I believe in a "true" secret ballot. I believe in each person having one vote. I question the reason for keeping both NEA and AFT organizations separate in states if they choose not to merge.

If we truly want a unified organization, why aren't we working to become one? With the different combinations, won't we weaken our organization?

Most of the members of my local aren't opposed to the merger. Their concerns are with affiliation with the AFL-CIO. They want to be assured that the welfare of all children will not suffer. They want a true professional organization. They want a guarantee that their dues dollars won't be siphoned to issues we don't believe in.

Donna DeKraai
Brookings, South Dakota

About Our Future

For me, the importance of keeping a public school system is at the heart of the unity debate.

The "enterprise" of public education is not secure. It's time for us to step up to the challenge of creating a system that meets the needs of all students. That's our job.

Creating a new organization is the best way to get the job done. It's no longer in our interest to fight inside the education family for turf. Quality is the issue, not who owns it.

Kay Lybeck, president
Arizona Education Association

No Union Label Here

The union label won't wear well in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. I expect we'll lose members and public support for public education if NEA and the AFT merge. I hear talk that some state and local affiliates may disaffiliate if such a merger occurs.

Thomas Long
Mt. Solon, Virginia

Merger in Minnesota

As the president of a local that's been merged with the AFT for five years, I've seen the benefits of unity.

Since our merger in 1992, we've increased membership involvement in local activities, created a model community connection program, elected school board members who support public education, and started to create a professional development program.

Most importantly, we are drawing on the talents and energy of all our school districts' teachers to create an environment that improves our educational system and that directly benefits children.

The national merger will allow us to focus on and demonstrate even more forcefully what really counts: the students!

Jim Smola
Dakota County, Minnesota

We're nearing the end of two years as a totally merged local. It works. It works very well! Despite years of animosity and contested representation elections, it's remarkable how quickly suspicions melt away when you join in a common cause.

Our new teachers accept our unified status as a fact of life. If an "old-timer" tries to recount the past organizational wards, new staff simply can't comprehend it.

And in late March, when we flooded the school board room with teachers young and old, former HEA and former HFT, all wearing "Settle Now!" buttons, clearly we were the Hibbing United Educators.

We can't ever again be anything else.

Steve Koskovich
Hibbing, Minnesota

Gave Away the Store

I believe merger is a step in the wrong direction. The Principles of Unity are based on the AFT model, which means we gave away the store! We are the larger organization. Why should we lose anything? Boards of education use

Letter from: Belvidere, Illinois

How To Vote on Unity? This Delegate's Still on the Fence

It's here. Ready or not, this summer, delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly will decide the future of our organization by accepting or rejecting merger with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

In a few short months, we—as Illinois delegates—must analyze the unity proposal, seek member input, and cast a vote in New Orleans that reflects the best interests of nearly 100,000 Illinois Education Association members.

It's challenging indeed to add merger to our plates, already filled with school duties, Association activities, and time for families.

As a classroom teacher and delegate, I'm torn.

NEA President Bob Chase, Vice President Reg Weaver, and others have eloquently made the case that a united voice through merger is the best hope for advancing the cause of public education and its employees. Some of their arguments are quite compelling.

Yet I listen carefully to colleagues who raise worst fears that this merger will be counterproductive, leaving us less able to preserve, protect, and defend our employee rights, our professional welfare, and the institution of public education.

I have three questions I believe I share with hundreds of thousands of NEA members across the nation.

- First and foremost, what does AFL-CIO affiliation mean for us?

Illinois school employees around our state—K-12, higher ed, certified, ESPs—are independent thinkers. To date, we've been able to focus exclusively on matters directly affecting our schools and ourselves.

At this time, when we face unprecedented attacks on all fronts, will AFL-CIO affiliation give us greater strength in numbers—or will we become a larger, but less focused organization, distracted by other agendas?

- A second major question involves political action. For several years, IEA has carefully followed a bipartisan policy, building an "education party." We've reached out to supportive Republicans across the state. We're no longer captive to the rise or fall of one party on a given election day.

We need only look to neighboring states to see what happens when all eggs are placed in one political basket. Indeed, we've fared comparatively well in the political world of the 1990s.

How does this compare with the AFL-CIO? Nationally, as well as here in Illinois, the AFL-CIO and Illinois Federation of Teachers have been fiercely loyal to the Democratic Party.

What will happen to our bipartisan agenda in a merged organization? I'm not willing to give up or seriously compromise political action that works thanks to the support and effort of thousands of my fellow members.

- A third thorny question involves representation and decision making in the merged organization.

NEA is a truly democratic system with safeguards ensuring that small locals, different constituent groups, and minorities have voices that are heard and heeded in the running of the organization.

The merger appears to move us much closer to the AFT model, dominated by large urban districts like Chicago.

In my region, as in many others in the Illinois Education Association, our smallest local represents a school staff of fewer than 20, and none comes close to 1,000 members.

How will our multitude of voices be heard in this merged organization? That remains unclear to me.

What is clear is that I can't vote for merger unless I'm persuaded that a "yes" vote will not muffle or mute the voices of our members.

I don't want to be an obstructionist. My vote is by no means set in cement. I look for and want to hear answers to my questions.

But I can't become a "yes" vote unless there's reasonable assurance that this merger at this time will bring us the best hopes for a mightier voice for our cause.

I need to know that a "yes" vote won't bring about the worst fears in the minds of my colleagues.

For once we enter a merged world, there will be no turning back to the NEA we have come to know, trust, and support.

In the words of a long-time friend of mine, "If it's not a better mousetrap, why build it?"

Ken Swanson, a sixth grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary School, belongs to the Belvidere Education Association in northern Illinois.

their clout more effectively than the NEA did.

Sue Maurer
Parlin, New Jersey

One Voice

As a member of NEA for nine years, I'm excited about the proposed merger of NEA and the AFT. One of the greatest problems in education is that teachers rarely speak with one voice.

But I'm opposed to the affiliation with the AFL-CIO that comes along with the merger. I have nothing against unions—I was a member of an AFL-CIO union when I worked in the mining industry.

Still, I'm concerned that our critics would use this affiliation to show that we are more worried about pay and other teacher-centered issues than we are about creating a better educational environment for our children.

Mark High
Gunnison, Colorado

Wrong Direction

I'm highly opposed to the merger. The Georgia Association of Educators has faced declining membership since the early 1970s, when a competing organization formed in opposition to mandatory NEA affiliation for all state affiliates.

Should the merger pass, GAE would nearly disappear, since so many members opposed to AFL-CIO affiliation would withdraw.

And, because Georgia is a "right-to-work" state, AFL-CIO affiliation would harm the friendly relationship we now enjoy with our state legislature.

If delegates vote to unify, the positive turnaround GAE has made in the last several years would be in danger.

Jeff Hubbard
Douglasville, Georgia

The Fight's Over

For 20 years I've taught in a school district in the San Francisco Bay area where NEA and AFT units regularly fought each other in decertification elections. Teacher morale suffered greatly, as did our salaries, which the administration was able to hold down by capitalizing on our disunity.

Fortunately, for the past three years, the two organizations have formed a coalition and worked together. Relations among teachers have improved, and so have contract negotiations.

Here's hoping for similar results on the national scene. We need all the help we can get.

Chuck Flagg
Morgan Hill, California

Not Professional

My wife and I, both long-time NEA members, are adamantly opposed to this merger. We feel AFT is more of labor organization and less of a professional alliance.

As educators, we need to act and behave as professionals, and the AFL-CIO is not an organization of professionals. It has too often been associated with organized crime, absolutely the last thing educators need to be involved with!

Kelly and Lois Lounsberry
Bolivar, New York

On the Same Page

I read NEA President Bob Chase's column, "Why Unite?" (President's Viewpoint, April), and he is right. NEA and the AFT should unite. It only makes sense. If both groups are for the right things—giving children a quality education and taking care of effective teachers—we should be on the same page.

I'm glad to see both groups take positions in favor of higher standards for students and teachers. If we choose effective teachers and give them good salaries, benefits, and working conditions, we will have an effective educational system.

Willie Elliott
McDowell, Kentucky

Let's Talk

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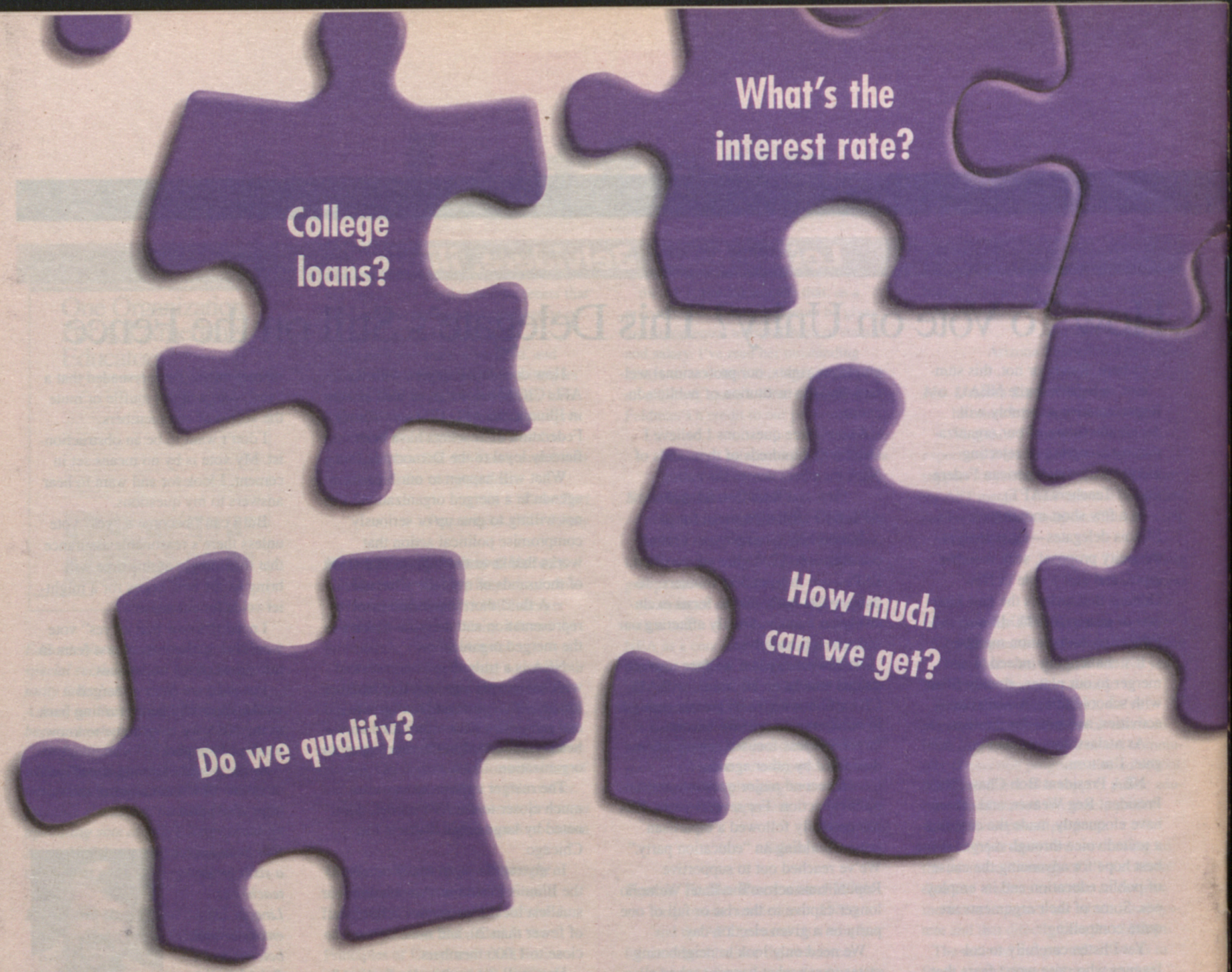

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